KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

Is Dating Dated in Times of Tinder? Exploring the Mediatization of Casual Sexual Intimacy

Elisabeth TIMMERMANS

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de
graad van Doctor in de Sociale Wetenschappen

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Steven Eggermont
Onderzoekseenheid: School voor Massacommunicatieresearch
Copromotor: Prof. Dr. Jan Van den Bulck [University of Michigan, USA]
Copromotor: Dr. Elien De Caluwé [Universiteit Gent]

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Samenstelling van de examencommissie:

Prof. Dr. Rudi Laermans (voorzitter)
Prof. Dr. Steven Eggermont (promotor)
Prof. Dr. Jan Van den Bulck (copromotor) [University of Michigan, USA]
Dr. Elien De Caluwé (copromotor) [Universiteit Gent]
Prof. Dr. Cédric Courtois [KU Leuven]
Prof. Dr. Peter Kerkhof [Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, NL]
Prof. Dr. Jenna McNallie [Augsburg College, USA]
Prof. Dr. Janelle Ward [Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, NL]

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INTRODUCTION

"Who could manage without a cell-phone, e-mail, favorite social networking site, or whatever means of communication one chooses to stay connected?" Lundby (2009, p. 1) rhetorically asks his readers. In both relationships and dating cultures, communication technologies have become omnipresent (e.g., Baker & Carreño, 2016; Jonason, Li, & Cason, 2009). Our search for potential mates as well as the way in which we approach them, all involve some form of communication technology. In fact, relationship initiation, intimacy formation and relationship development in contemporary society cannot be understood without taking media into account. A societal change that does not remain without criticism.

According to Bauman (2003), computer-mediated dating has transformed dating into a type of entertainment, a phenomenon others refer to as "relationshopping" (e.g., Heino, Ellison, & Gibbs, 2010). In 2004, Ben-Ze'ev concluded that online dating sites challenge monogamy and marriage, as they generally offer people the ability to conduct exciting affairs online with relatively low costs and risks compared to offline circumstances. Moreover, the greater availability of choices increases the inability to be satisfied with one's current partner. Back then, Ben Ze'ev (2004, p. 244) predicted that in the near future we would "witness a significant increase in the low-cost and low-risk sexual opportunities that are accessible to all types of people."

A couple years later, the advent of mobile dating applications ushered in a new moral panic in which the focus on internet dating's influence on extramarital sexual intercourse shifted to mobile dating's influence on casual sexual interactions. Sales (2015), for instance, referred in Vanity Fair to mobile dating applications as responsible for the "dawn of the dating apocalypse." The young adults she quotes in her article seem unable to form emotional commitment as their dates mediated through mobile dating apps mainly lead to casual sexual encounters. Biological anthropologist Helen Fisher (2016a) explains that online dating technologies create cognitive overload in the human brain by providing access to a large pool of potential partners. Later in her book, she ties this to the concept of "slow love." Due to large societal changes, such as the detrimental increase in divorce rates and the increase in partner choice, young adults have become cautious about commitment. Casual sex gives them the opportunity to connect with and fully explore potential partners. Fisher (2016a) concludes that the prevalence of casual sex – whether induced by new dating technologies or not – does not change how humans perceive and experience love, thereby taking a less pessimistic stance towards mobile dating applications.

Notably, the idea of "slow love" is not new. In 1992, sociologist Anthony Giddens coined a similar concept, which he referred to as "confluent love." Through this concept, Giddens (1992) reflects on a relationship based on sexual and emotional equality, which continues only for as long as both parties derive mutual satisfaction from it and remain invested in the relationship. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) also noted that people in contemporary society are confronted with an endless series of choices as part of constructing, adjusting, and developing the unions they form with others. As more and more people become aware that relationships do not last forever (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992), they are more likely to invest in themselves or other relationships such as friendships. Intimacy thus becomes a process of self-actualization, which we need to control ourselves (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Contrarily, others argue that it is rather the visibility of media representations of sex and new technology that enable new forms of sexual encounters (e.g., cybersex) that are changing the committed nature of intimacy to a more casual one (e.g., Attwood, 2009; Ben Ze'ev, 2004; Schaefer, 2014).

While it is easy to blame technology for the changes we are experiencing when it comes to casual sexual intimacy, such a view would be too deterministic. The transformation of intimacy during emerging adulthood in relation to the use of mobile dating apps benefits from exploring its relation to wider processes of social change, which is where the concept of mediatization becomes useful. According to this framework, "it is not the media as a technology that are causal, but the changes in how people communicate when constructing their inner and exterior realities by referring to media" (Krotz, 2009, p. 25). Mediatization thus seeks to capture the shifting interrelationship between socio-cultural change and media-communicative change (Hepp, 2013). The mediatization of emerging adults' casual sexual intimacies explores the role of mobile dating apps in processes of social and cultural change, in which mediatization is equally important and related to other meta-processes that have contributed to an increase in casual sexual encounters and relationships, such as the individualization and democratization of personal lives (e.g., Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Fisher, 2016a; Giddens, 1992).

SOCIETAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGES IN SEXUAL INTIMACY

As clearly illustrated in Jane Austen's novels, courtship in the 18th century and throughout the start of the 20th century was described as the practice of "calling." Being in charge of deciding who could court them, young women would attend balls and dances to scout potential suitors and invite them to their homes under the supervision of a chaperone (Illouz, 1997). However, dating rituals started to change after World War I. The roaring twenties came with a dating culture that took courtship out on the street and shifted power from women to men. As Fisher (2016b) jokingly

remarked, the automobile was a first important technological change that influenced courtship by creating "rolling bedrooms." The entertainment industry gave young adults the opportunity to get away from the privacy of the home and men treated women in exchange for small sexual favors (Illouz, 1997). In contrast to the calling era, the goal of dating was not to begin a relationship, but to go out with as many different people as possible (Wade, 2017).

The Great Depression and World War II put a hold on this dating culture, as women greatly outnumbered men and acted upon this uncertainty by dropping dating in favor of monogamous relationships with men that potentially led to matrimony. This was referred to as "going steady" (Wade, 2017), a practice that was more in favor of premarital sex due to important sociological changes that came with the first sexual revolution. Starting in the 1960s, the sexual revolution – which was in part influenced by the women's movement, feminism, and the gay and lesbian movements – created new perspectives and practices regarding sexuality in Western countries. People were no longer expected to remain a virgin until marriage, young women who got pregnant were not required to have an illegal abortion, and homosexuality was no longer perceived as a sin, crime or disease (Hekma & Giami, 2014).

This was partly possible because of the rapidly diminished influential power of religious doctrine on sexual morality and sexual practice in several countries, including Belgium (Dupont, 2014). From then on, love instead of marriage became central to romantic relationships and contraceptive methods and the legalization of abortion finally became negotiable (Hekma & Giami, 2014). This increased accessibility of contraception paved the way for a rise in premarital sex (Whyte, 1990). In addition, the feminist movement encouraged women to become less reliant on their husbands for economic security and pursue their own career beyond the home. During this era, college enrolments for women began to outnumber men, which is a trend that has been observed in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) as well and will likely continue to the present day as can be illustrated by the following numbers: while in the 2008-2009 academic year 98,677 females and 82,763 males enrolled for higher education, 121,198 females and 99,933 males did so in the 2013-2014 academic year (Vlaamse Overheid, 2014, p. 25).

The sexual revolution certainly played an important role in changing sexual values and attitudes. However, when it comes to actual sexual behavior, its impact appears to have been limited. That is to say, young people would only engage in premarital sex with a partner to whom they felt emotionally close (Salisbury & Salisbury, 1971; Sorensen, 1973). As such, mainly young couples began using the pill for birth control (Dupont, 2014), suggesting that an increase in premarital sex does not necessarily equal a boost in the number of sexual partners. Additionally, the awareness of the AIDS epidemic during the early 1990s reinvented sexual conservatism and

with it a return to committed sexual relationships with careful sexual practices (Lewis, Malow, & Ireland, 1997). Nonetheless, "serial monogamy" was already a common relationship pattern for young adults nearing the end of the 20th century, meaning that young adults would start a relationship when falling in love and end that same relationship once falling out of love. This way, they experienced multiple partnering as the duration of these relationships usually ranged between a couple weeks or months and a few years (Sorensen, 1973). However, given the centrality of love within serial monogamy, it seems that changes in *casual* sexual behavior started to change closer to the 21st century, as illustrated in the next section.

FROM LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT TO SEX AT FIRST NIGHT

Towards the end of the 20th century, researchers started to examine casual sex (e.g., Weaver & Herold, 2000). The term "hookup" appears to have entered the academic literature at around the year 2000 and was typically defined as "a sexual encounter which may or may not include sexual intercourse, usually occurring between people who are strangers or brief acquaintances" (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000, p. 76). As researchers gained a better understanding of casual sex over the past decade, new definitions were created to describe contexts in which these casual sexual behaviors usually occur. These contexts of casual sex generally vary along three dimensions: (1) the frequency of sexual contact (i.e., only one time vs. several times), (2) the level of closeness between the individuals before the sexual contact occurs (i.e., strangers, acquaintances, nonromantic friends, or ex-partners), and (3) the kind of sexual behavior during the casual sexual interaction (i.e., kissing, genital touching, oral sex, anal sex, and vaginal sex) (see Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Vrangalova, 2015). For instance, whereas a "hookup" is more broadly defined as any form of sexual intimacy between strangers or acquaintances (Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Paul et al., 2000), a "one-night stand" (or sexual hookup) requires "singular, non-monetary, voluntary sexual (either genital or oral) intercourse with a stranger or acquaintance" (Kaspar, Buß, Rogner, & Gnambs, 2016). Similarly, casual sexual relationships are divided into several categories ranging from a series of ongoing casual sexual interactions with a stranger or acquaintance (i.e., booty call or fuck buddy), a friend (i.e., friend with benefits) or an ex-partner (Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2012; Mongeau, Knight, Williams, Eden, & Shaw, 2013; Wentland & Reissing, 2011).

Several scholars argue it is predominantly the U.S. college campus that creates an environment that facilitates casual sex within these contexts. For example, a study found that students hooked up significantly more during the first semester compared to summer (Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013). Once entering the college environment, students experience independence

from adult supervision (Allison & Risman, 2014) and the accessibility of alcohol (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). Especially when there is a dominant Greek culture on U.S. college campuses, students experience the hooking up as pervasive (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017). Wade (2017) notes that when students would talk about sex within a hookup context, they were almost always referring to drunk sex. This helped them to perceive the sexual interaction as meaningless. Yet, it is important to distinguish between those living on campus and commuters. At universities where students were predominantly commuters hooking up seemed to be less prevalent (Wade, 2017), possibly because they experience less sexual freedom due to parental control (Allison & Risman, 2014).

Other individual factors that influence engagement in casual sex are gender, social class, race, religion, and personality traits. Male students, for instance, generally report more sexual hookups than their female counterparts (e.g., Townsend & Wasserman, 2011) and men are more likely to reap the benefits from casual sex compared to women (Campbell, 2008; Fisher, Worth, Garcia, & Meredith, 2012). Regarding class and race, researchers found that predominantly white and middle-class students reported engagement in casual sex (Allison & Risman, 2014), whereas black women and Asian men were least likely to report casual sexual behavior (Wade, 2017). Additionally, U.S. students' regular attendance at religious services decreased engagement in casual sexual behavior (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012) and notably significantly less hooking up occurs on conservative Christian campuses (Helm Jr, Gondra, & McBride, 2015). Personality psychologists found extraversion and sensation seeking to be positively associated with engagement in casual sex, a higher number of casual sexual partners, and more sexual risk taking (Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008; Hoyle, Fejfar, & Miller, 2000; Kaspar et al., 2016), whereas conscientiousness was negatively associated with engagement in casual sex and sexual risk taking (Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008; Hoyle et al., 2000).

Based on an extensive amount of in-depth interviews and focus groups, some researchers argued that casual sex has become part of a new dating culture currently dominating the U.S. college campus. Within this new dating culture (often referred to as the "hookup culture"), casual sexual interactions usually precede any form of relational commitment (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Stepp, 2007; Wade, 2017). According to Bauman (2003, xi), connections between people have become more "light and loose" which makes it easier for people to start and end sexual relationships. However, given that we came loose from the romantic ideal and sex as a reproduction strategy, casual sex might as well have become a form of self-expression (cf., Giddens, 1992).

MEDIATIZATION AND CASUAL SEXUAL INTIMACY

The 21st century is characterized by the rapid evolution of media. The variety of devices and communication technologies that influence our interactions have made society more complex. On a micro-level, such communication technologies complicate interactions, as the technology owner becomes dependent on external influences or has the ability to change the situation by using that medium (e.g., a mobile dating application user can find potential (sex) partners within the vicinity and thereby change the course of his or her evening). Consequently, these media technologies could influence contemporary dating and casual sexual intimacy on a macro-level (Krotz, 2009). According to Hughes (1994), there is a difference between the period when a media technology is being developed and the period in which it has become fully established and institutionalized in society. When in the development phase, a media technology is open to a variety of social and cultural influences. Contrarily, when fully established, it may achieve a momentum of its own (Hjarvard, 2013). Whereas television can be perceived as a medium that has become fully established, mobile dating applications are still in their development phase. Therefore, only focusing on mobile dating applications when studying the mediatization of casual sexual intimacy would be too simplistic.

In fact, some argue that the sexual revolution as discussed in the previous section was primarily a media revolution as the media played a central role in the switch of sexual matters from private to public (e.g., McNair, 2002; Schaefer, 2014). Media portrayals of sex and sexuality played a role in the democratization and individualization of intimacy (e.g., Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; Shumway, 2003). Following De Ridder's (2017) reasoning on sexualities, the *mediatization of casual sexual intimacy* points towards the historical transformation of *casual sexual intimacy because of media*. Indeed, many aspects of people's sexual lives in Western cultures are now mediated, meaning they are made into symbolic content by using technological and institutional tools for communication (Attwood, 2009; Silverstone, 2002). In 1976, cultivation theorists proposed that television plays a crucial role as cultural storyteller in socialization by offering a "coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is relevant to what, and what is right" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176). Back then, when the media were few, it was easier to study the 'effects' of television on (casual) sexual intimacy. However, with the all-embracing media, questions of the media's influence have to be posed in new ways and call for other approaches than those thinking in terms of cause and effect.

To illustrate with an example: early in 2017, Flanders was completely smitten with the Dutch version of Temptation Island in which two Dutch and two Flemish couples agreed to be separated for eleven days. They would each stay on a separate island with a group of singles of the

opposite sex, in order to test the strength of their relationship. Watching this show when it was broadcasted for the first time in Belgium (i.e., 2002) was a completely different experience. Fifteen years ago, people would watch Temptation Island at home, maybe discuss it with others and read about it in the newspapers and magazines. Maybe some viewers would do research online and contact one of the participants through e-mail. Contrarily, today we not only witness the couples publicly cheating on each other, but we follow their Instagram accounts to see how their casual sexual intimacies further develop months after their participation in the television program. We may even form parasocial relationships with these public figures, as we can easily befriend them on Facebook and observe their public fights on Twitter. A traditional media-approach generally investigates how exposure to this reality show potentially influenced our attitudes and behaviors related to casual sex. Yet, such an approach would not capture the public social media discourse surrounding the casual sexual behavior portrayed in such reality shows and its additional influence on attitude-formation.

The main strength of the concept of mediatization is that it, in contrast to media effect and media use theories, takes into account that culture and society have become mediatized (Hjarvard, 2013). However, in order to study the mediatization of casual sexual intimacy, a micro-level perspective in the empirical studies conducted for the purpose of this dissertation will be applied. Moreover, as shown below, this dissertation will make heuristic use of existing theories and methodologies in order to make sense of the changing role of the media in contemporary culture and society. It is important to note that this prevents us from making totalizing accounts of universal media influence at the macro-level. Nonetheless, this will be an important start to examine the relation between changing media on the one hand, and changes in casual sexual intimacy on the other, while also keeping in mind the cultural and societal changes as discussed in the previous sections.

The Casual Sexual Script in Popular U.S. Television Shows

In the literature on casual sex, several authors seem to assume that a new sexual script is dominating U.S. college campuses (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). When describing factors that could have potentially influenced the rise in casual sexual behavior, researchers often refer to the media and television in particular (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Yet, media studies have a hard time confirming this proposition. Aubrey and Smith (2016), for instance, extended this body of literature by examining the association between sexually oriented media exposure and the endorsement of the hookup culture (i.e., the belief that casual sex is harmless, without emotional commitment, fun, status enhancing, a reflection of one's sexual freedom, and a way to assert control over one's sexuality).

Their findings indicate that male college students who are exposed to such sexually oriented media content in the beginning of the semester, are more likely to endorse the hookup culture at the end of their first year. However, no such significant association was found for female college students, suggesting that this is a complicated and gendered process.

Remarkably, international studies examining the relationship between exposure to sexual television content and sexually related attitudes and behaviors often included U.S. television content in their measurement of sexual television exposure (e.g., Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2014). Such findings suggest that U.S. television's influence on sexual attitudes and behavior is not limited to the country itself, but has the ability to influence casual sexual attitudes and behaviors overseas. So far, several content analyses have found that sexual talk and sexual behavior are often portrayed in U.S. television shows (Bond & Drogos, 2014; Kunkel, Eyal, Donnerstein, Biely, & Rideout, 2007) and have few emotional or physical consequences (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2004; Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005).

While these content analyses were very useful in gaining a better understanding of sexual portrayals on the screen, they were not very informative on the relational context within which these sexual behaviors occur. One could argue, for instance, that sexual portrayals within the context of a committed relationship are not that harmful, as sexual intercourse within a committed relationship is generally perceived as a normative and even desired behavior (Hicks, McNulty, Meltzer, & Olson, 2016). However, when sexual intercourse is mainly portrayed within a casual sexual context, viewers might receive a different message, in which they come to believe that when they want to have sexual intercourse, they should have it with a casual sexual partner. One theory that can help in explaining this reasoning is the Sexual Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Based on the same reasoning that relationships are held together by observing certain rules (e.g., Shimanoff, 1980), sexual scripts provide a set of rules with regards to what is expected to occur within (casual) sexual situations (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). These sexual scripts exist at three distinct levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 1987). Cultural scenarios are the societal norms and narratives that provide guidelines for sexual conduct. For instance, when attitudes toward sexual practice do not relate directly to procreation or to the intimacy of the relationship, they are in the *recreational* category of cultural scripts (Mahay, Laumann, & Michaels, 2000). On the interpersonal level, abstract cultural scenarios are translated into interpersonal scripts that can be applied to particular situations. In other words, individuals carry out strategies to obtain their own sexual wishes with regard to the actual or anticipated response of another person. Finally, intrapsychic scripts are sexual dialogues with the self. Sexual fantasies, for instance, belong to the intrapsychic level (Simon & Gagnon, 1986, 1987).

For the purpose of this dissertation, the sexual scripts at the cultural level as disseminated by the media are of most interest. According to Simon and Gagnon (1986), the most prominent cultural scenarios of sexual scripts are well established by young adulthood and will likely influence the lives, values, and choices of individuals throughout later life stages (Sakaluk, Todd, Milhausen, Lachowsky, & URGiS, 2014). Therefore, it is important to examine the frequency and variety of casual sexual scripts that are disseminated through popular U.S. television content, in order to better understand changes in casual sexual intimacy.

Affordances of Mobile Dating Applications

When studying changes in sexual intimacy along with changes in media and communication, one should take into account the expansion of internet access via the World Wide Web from the 1990s and its move to smart mobile devices from the 2000s (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). According to Goluboff (2015, p. 2), smartphones are essential in the formation of self and sexual identity because of their ability to provide a forum in which emerging adults "can reinforce, evaluate, and even challenge sexual scripts and gender boundaries during hookups." The use of a smartphone is also a prerequisite to initiate sexual activity within a casual sexual relationship (Jonason et al., 2009). Mobile dating applications, a recent development within these smartphones, might challenge intimacy even more so, by providing users access to a large pool of potential (casual) partners that are within the vicinity.

At first, research attention related to mobile dating applications was mainly limited to Grindr, a location-based mobile dating application predominantly targeted at men who have sex with men (e.g., Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; Licoppe, Rivière, Morel, 2016; Yeo & Fung, 2016) and had a strong focus on sexual risk behavior (e.g., Landovitz et al., 2013) and its influence on casual sexual intimacy (e.g., Race, 2015; Stempfhuber & Liegl, 2016). The growing popularity of Grindr quickly led to the development of lesbian (e.g., Murray & Sapnar Ankerson, 2016; Tang, 2017) and heterosexual alternatives, of which Tinder is the dominant leader in Western societies (Duguay, 2017). The introduction of new technologies often brings skepticism and raises concerns among people (e.g., Berger & Smith, 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that aside from examining mobile dating applications' influence on casual sex (e.g., Choi et al., 2016; Landovitz et al., 2013; Licoppe et al., 2016) and dating (e.g., Chan, 2017; Hobbs, Owen, & Gerber, 2017), researchers have also examined its relation to self-presentation (e.g., Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Ward, 2016a; 2016b), body image (Strubel & Petrie, 2017), trolling (March, Grieve, Marrington, & Jonason, 2017), racism (Mason, 2016) and privacy concerns (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017).

From a mediatization perspective, a medium's influence on a micro-social level depends on the concrete affordances (i.e., material and technical features and social and aesthetic qualities)

of the medium in question (Hjarvard, 2013). Gibson (1979) introduced the concept of *affordances* to refer to the subjective perceptions of artifacts that are based on their objective qualities, to help explain how human beings and animals perceive and interact with the world around them. According to Gibson (1979), any given physical object lends itself to a set of uses and the affordances of this object are translated in its potential uses by virtue of its material characteristics such as shape and size. These affordances structure interaction between actor and object by making certain actions possible and ruling out other actions.

Throughout this dissertation, the focus will be mainly on the mobile dating application Tinder. Although the developers of Tinder are rather secretive about sharing the exact number of people on the service, the New York Times estimated it around 50 million active users in 2014 (Bilton, 2014). In 2016, the application was downloaded more than 100 million times and 60% of users were estimated to come from outside North America (Smith, 2017). In order to explain affordances related to Tinder, it is necessary to provide more information about this application that can only be downloaded on a mobile device. After downloading the application, users need to log in with their Facebook account to start using the application. This way, Facebook serves as a primary actor in verifying that users on Tinder are real and provides data to construct the Tinder profile such as the user's first name, age, gender, recent photos, Facebook friends and Facebook likes (Duguay, 2017). **Figure 1** illustrates what a Tinder profile looks like (middle picture). In the next step, users determine their search criteria based on distance, gender, and age preferences (David & Cambre, 2016) as illustrated in the left picture in **Figure 1**.

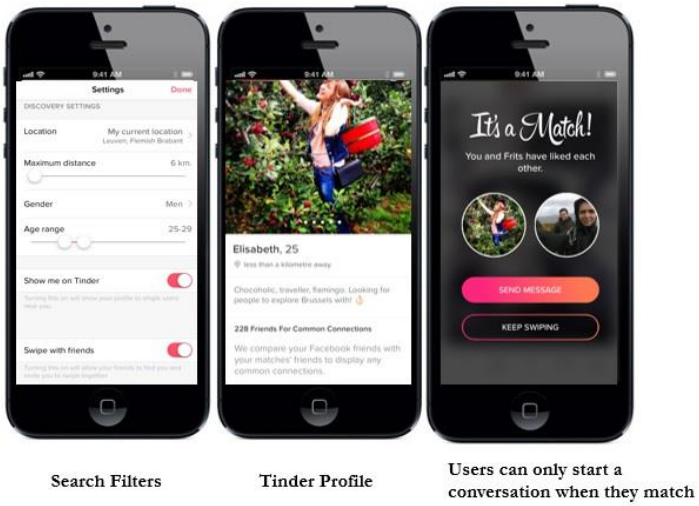

Figure 1. *Visualization of the search filters, a Tinder profile, and a match.*

Once users have an account and they selected their swipe criteria, they can start swiping other users. Tinder displays the picture of potential matches by showing only one potential match a time (see **Figure 2**, swipe screen). To like the potential match, the user has to swipe right. By swiping left, the user indicates not being interested in the other person (see **Figure 3**). Only if both users like each other's picture, Tinder considers it a match and will enable communication between the users (see **Figure 1**, right picture). This way, the matching process is based on mutual consent and users won't have to deal with unsolicited e-mails or unwanted attempts to establish contact, which is often the case in online dating sites. A user's matches and conversations are summarized in the messenger function (**Figure 2**, right picture).

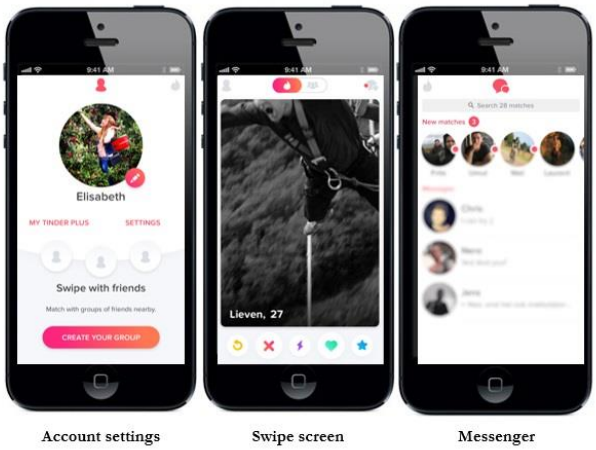

Figure 2. *Visualization of account settings, swipe screen, and the messenger function.*

Figure 3. *Visualization of the swiping process in which users swipe left to dislike a person and swipe right to like a person.*

Lutz and Ranzini (2017) compared the affordances of the mobile dating application Tinder with the four key communicative affordances of mobile media (i.e., *portability*, *availability*, *locatability*, and *multimediality;* Schrock, 2015) and concluded that the dating application Tinder expands affordances coming from its mobile status such as what Chan (2017) refers to as *mobility, authenticity,* and *visual dominance.* The *mobility* affordance (which exceeds the *portability affordance*) refers to the ability to use these apps in different locations, ranging from public to private spaces. Moreover, Lutz and Ranzini (2017) tie this to the *availability* affordance which enhances the spontaneity and frequency of use, as users can generally use these applications anywhere at any time. Contrarily, users often need a computer to log in to online dating websites, which are usually accessed in the privacy of the home. In addition, Lutz and Ranzini (2017) mention that this *mobility* affordance of mobile dating applications also induces an entertainment component, in which people actually enjoy browsing others' profiles in public spaces.

Yeo and Fung (2016) argue that several features of mobile dating applications' designs accelerate the tempo of interactions. On top of the *mobility* and *availability* affordances, mobile dating apps generally have an available notification system to alert users about new messages and/or matches, even when not using the application. Marcus (2016) refers to this as the *synchronicity* affordance, given the short time span in which messages are exchanged. Because people generally take their smartphones wherever they go, it is easier to continue interactions started on such applications compared to interactions started on online dating websites (Yeo & Fung, 2016). The affordance of *geolocation* also influences instantaneous arrangements of meetings in real life (Yeo & Fung, 2016) by displaying potential partners who are in the immediate vicinity. Instead of showing friends who are simultaneously online (which is often the case for Instant Messaging software), mobile dating applications display potential partners who are nearby (Sutko & De Souza e Silva, 2011). This is made possible by using the smartphone's GPS or Bluetooth system, which gives mobile dating apps access to other's geolocative information (Blackwell et al., 2015). Mobile dating applications thus offer the opportunity to connect with other users because of semi-public profiles that are centered around the user but, in contrast to social networking sites, these connections are not public (Ward, 2016a).

These affordances of *proximity/locatability* and *immediacy* can foster mobile intimacy by overlaying geographic space "with an electronic position and relational presence, which is emotional and social" (Hjorth, 2013, p. 113). According to Duguay (2017), both the co-presence and mobile intimacy intensify the immediacy and ability of users to meet through apps. This is another big difference between mobile dating applications and online dating websites, as it can take users of the latter weeks to months before they actually meet up with another user in an offline

context (Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, & Felt, 2008). Notably, Licoppe and colleagues argue that the *proximity* and *immediacy* affordances provide users of mobile dating apps targeted at homosexuals with "fast sexual encounters" (Licoppe et al., 2016, p. 2545). Moreover, compared to interactions in an offline environment, people on mobile dating apps have the ability to start intimate conversations with several other users at the same time, instead of being limited to only one conversation.

Furthermore, as the majority of mobile dating apps targeted at heterosexuals (e.g., Tinder, Happn) require users to register with an existing Facebook account, they offer a certain level of *authenticity* (Chan, 2017; Duguay, 2017). The information on users' profiles is automatically filled in (with exception of the optional short bio), meaning that users spend less time and effort on self-presentation. This account set-up differs from the one related to most online dating websites, in which users often have to complete extensive questionnaires on their personality and partner preferences (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). Contrarily, the pre-set parameters that make up the search criteria on Tinder contain the users' limited geographical perimeter and their age and sex preferences (David & Cambre, 2016).

However, such connection to Facebook does not only simplify the account setting and the matching process but also motivates their users to filter potential partners mainly based on appearance (Ward, 2016a). Consequently, this built-in evaluative component (e.g., "swiping right" or "liking") leads to individuals using Tinder to be validated by others (Strubel & Petrie, 2017). Several authors argue that these affordances contribute to the addictiveness of using mobile dating applications, such as the immediate social appreciation and connection, the ease and feasibility of account creation, the limitless possibilities of connecting with potential partners in the vicinity, and the swipe logic (e.g., David & Cambre, 2016; Orosz, Tóth-Király, Bőthe, & Melher, 2016), whereas others argue they create a feeling of competition (e.g., Marcus, 2016) and cognitive overload (e.g., Fisher, 2016a).

Regarding the *multimediality* affordance usually linked to mobile media, Lutz and Ranzini (2017) argue that this affordance is limited on the mobile dating application Tinder, as Tinder users get to see one picture of another Tinder user at a time and decide with a quick thumb movement whether they want to match and potentially meet the other user in person (David & Cambre, 2016). Chan (2017) thus concludes that mobile dating apps have a *visual dominance* as the image takes up the whole screen of the phone. However, recent changes to the app allow users to link their Instagram accounts to their Tinder profile, thereby enabling greater *multimediality* during the swiping process. In addition, Tinder users usually continue their interactions on other media platforms such as Whatsapp, Skype, or Snapchat (Ward, 2016b). Yet, some researchers argue that

these interactions remain superficial as they are based mostly on one or more profile photos (Hobbs et al., 2017).

Importantly, Tinder has undergone several changes since its launch in 2012 as illustrated in **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**. In 2012, the application was completely free of charge, but in 2015 Tinder introduced Tinder Plus, the paid form of Tinder, in which users are no longer exposed to advertising while using the app. Any user under 30 is now charged $9.99 per month for using Tinder Plus features, whereas any user over 30 is charged $19.99 per month (these prices have also fluctuated over time). In 2015, the Tinder Plus features included unlimited swiping, the rewind feature (i.e., the user can load back the last person who was swiped left), and the passport feature, which allows users to change their locations (Prins, 2015; see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. *The Tinder interface in 2012 (left) versus 2015 (right) (Prins, 2015).*

Towards the end of 2015, Tinder launched the Super Like. This Super Like feature allows users to indicate when they are really interested in another user, which will be visible to that other user. According to Tinder, users who use this Super Like are three times more likely to match with someone they Super Liked and conversations initiated by a Super Like appear to last 70% longer. Users are allowed one Super Like every twelve hours with a free Tinder account. Paying subscribers to Tinder Plus are allowed five Super Likes per day (Tinder, 2015). As illustrated in **Figure 5**, the Super Like button has replaced the Passport feature in **Figure 4** (right button). Users can still access this Passport feature by going to their settings and changing their discovery preferences.

In 2016, Tinder again included new features, such as Tinder Social and Tinder Boost (paid feature). By including Tinder Social, Tinder gives its users the choice between swiping as a single user or as a group of friends that is looking for one or more other friends to hang out with (Tinder,

2016a). Tinder Boost, on the other hand, places users at the top for 30 minutes, giving them up to 10 times more profile views than the standard method, thereby increasing their chances for a match. This is a micropayment feature, meaning that users with a Tinder Plus subscription who get one "free" boost every month have to pay extra if they want to use another boost (Tinder, 2016b). In addition to their first name, age, a maximum of six profile pictures, mutual friends and/or interests derived from Facebook and a short bio limited to a 500 characters profile text (Ward, 2016b), Tinder users can now also add their job and education (which will appear below their first name and age) and their Instagram account (which will be visible when other users click on their profile). **Figure 5** explains the features of the Tinder swipe screen in 2017.

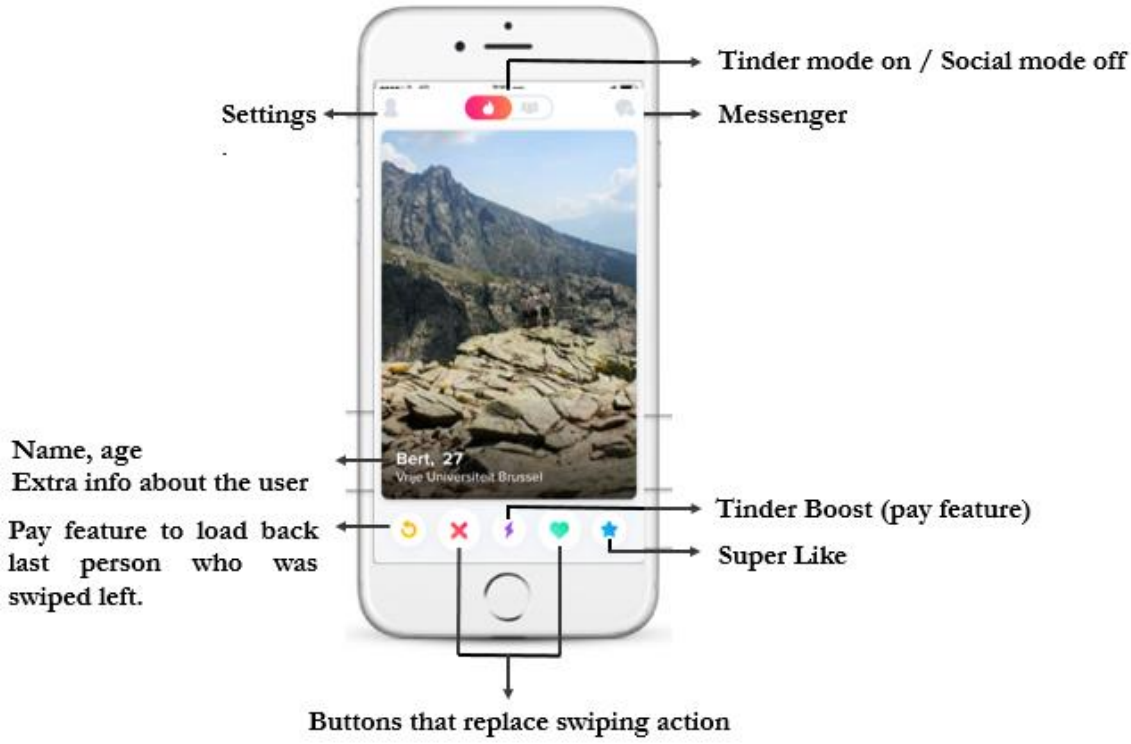

Figure 5. *The Tinder interface and its features in 2017.*

Recently, Tinder also introduced Smart Photos, a free feature based on an algorithm that helps users in receiving more right swipes by presenting other users their best pictures, based on the preferences of that other user (Hall, 2016). This Smart Photos algorithm does not only take into account the overall popularity of each photo but also considers the swiping patterns of other users, suggesting that Tinder gathers a lot of data, which can also be used for other purposes beyond the matching process. Consequently, researchers became interested in Tinder users' privacy concerns and found that users generally express more concerns related to their institutional

privacy (e.g., Tinder selling personal data) than their privacy concerns directed to peers (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017). The illustrated changes in the Tinder design and features imply that it is challenging to examine new technology and impossible to predict what Tinder will look like or will be used for one year from now.

Regarding the affordances of Tinder, it is important to note that Gibson's (1979) conceptualization of affordances was restricted to physical objects, thereby unclear how these affordances translate to the media. In his study of human use and technology, Norman (1990) points to the user's psychological evaluation of the object in relation to the user's objectives or motives, which he refers to as *perceived affordance*. According to Hjarvard (2013), this means that an object's affordances are not only influenced by the evaluation of single users but also the cultural conventions and interpretations that surround the object. Notably, the mainstream cultural convention that usually surrounds mobile dating applications is that they are often referred to as "hookup apps" instead of dating apps (e.g., David & Cambre, 2016; Mason, 2016). In the case of Tinder, such findings are not surprising, as Tinder initially promoted itself as a "supplement to hook-up culture" (Duguay, 2017, p. 358). Consequently, by applying Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974), users' motives for using Tinder will be investigated, as the aforementioned affordances presume that people will use mobile dating applications for far more reasons than merely dating purposes or casual sexual experiences.

DISSERTATION OUTLINE

This dissertation aims to investigate how changes in the media are related to changes in casual sexual intimacy in contemporary society. According to Shulman and Connolly (2013), emerging adults in contemporary society have adopted a late reproductive strategy because of the changing societal and economic conditions in the last two decades which gave them shakier prospects and greater uncertainty. Emerging adults themselves indicate they engage in casual sexual interactions because they are too busy for commitment, they feel too young to be tied down, and they experience geographic mobility (Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2014). Some researchers argue that the "pornification" of mass media is partly responsible for this increase in casual sexual behavior (Heldman & Wade, 2010), as sex is often portrayed as a leisure activity with few emotional or physical consequences (Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2005). In addition, with the advent of new communication technologies that connect people in the here and now, it has become easier than ever to find casual sexual partners using these devices (e.g., Bhattacharya, 2015; Race 2015).

Throughout this dissertation, the focus will be primarily on emerging adults. Whereas adolescents also engage in casual sex (e.g., Baker & Carreño, 2016; Erlandsson, Jinghede Nordvall, Öhman, & Häggström-Nordin, 2013), theories of romantic stage development propose that they have acquired the skills needed to commit to long-term partnerships when entering emerging adulthood (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Yet, because of several societal changes, such as the prolonged mating process due to the delay of marriage (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010) and given that they often have unstable and unpredictable lives due to frequent residential changes and aspire to obtain a broad range of life experiences before taking on enduring – and limiting – adult responsibilities (Arnett, 2000), emerging adults often fluctuate between romantic relationships (i.e., serial monogamy) or alternatively engage in casual sexual encounters and relationships (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, & Gordon, 2003). While there is less empirical evidence on Belgian emerging adults' experiences with casual sex, a Flemish representative sample of people between the ages 18 and 80 suggests a similar trend, as emerging adults (18- to 29-year-olds) were least likely to be in a committed relationship and most likely to report having one-time-only sex or an ongoing series of sexual encounters with a casual sexual partner (Buysse et al., 2013). Finally, this age group seems to be mainly attracted to mobile dating practices (Smith & Anderson, 2016). These mobile dating applications often have a strict age policy that prohibits use for anyone under the age of 18 (e.g., McGoogan, 2016), which is another reason to exclude adolescents from any of the studies in this dissertation.

In the literature on casual sex, several researchers examined casual sex within the context of either 1) casual sexual encounters (e.g., Kaspar et al., 2016; Paul et al., 2000), 2) casual sexual relationships (Mongeau et al., 2013; Wentland & Reissing, 2011; 2014) or 3) ex-sex (Halpern-Meekin et al., 2012). This dissertation will simultaneously examine all three relational contexts within which casual sex can occur, instead of focusing only on one relational context. In addition, Vrangalova (2015) argues that contradictory findings on predictors and consequences of casual sex can be attributed to the inconsistency of definitions used by researchers. To illustrate with an example: When definitions of hooking up include any sexual behavior ranging from the act of kissing to having sex, the large majority of respondents indicate having engaged in at least one hookup (e.g., Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Notably, these numbers tend to be significantly lower when these casual sexual interactions are more narrowly defined as vaginal, oral, or anal sex. Whereas 68.4% of male students and 70.4% of female students reported having engaged in at least one hookup, only 27.5% engaged in sexual intercourse during a hookup (Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013). To avoid confusion related to the sexual behaviors within these casual sexual experiences and relationships, it was decided to include in every

definition throughout this dissertation that these casual sexual behaviors include either oral, vaginal, or anal sex, thereby not including those casual sexual interactions in which only passionately kissing or intimate touching occurred.

With the existing body of literature mainly rooted in North American studies (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Mongeau et al., 2013), researchers highlight the importance of more international and intercultural studies regarding casual sexual experiences and relationships (e.g., Farvid & Braun, 2017; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Furthermore, research on diverse, non-college samples is needed, especially as these casual sexual behaviors seem to be more prevalent outside the college campus (Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2015; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). Therefore, the goal of the first chapter of this dissertation is twofold. First, it aims to investigate whether these new forms of contemporary casual sexual experiences and relationships also exist in Flanders. Second, since the majority of studies on emerging adults' experiences with casual sex are being focused on college students (e.g., Fielder et al., 2013; Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Kaspar et al., 2016; Wade, 2017), it will include a wide range of emerging adults, as it is more plausible to assume that solely being part of the college experience, casual sex might be part of emerging adulthood as a phase in life. Consequently, not only college students living on campus but also those commuting from their parents' homes, older emerging adults that already left the college campus and those that do not have any college experience will be included in the sample of this chapter. Although this first chapter is not directly related to media content or media use, it was a necessary first step to examine whether similar changes in intimacy took place in Belgium as well, before continuing to the media's role in this shift towards casual sexual intimacy.

Hjarvard (2013) distinguishes between an *indirect* (weak) form of mediatization and a *direct* (strong) form of mediatization. He describes indirect mediatization as occurring "when a given activity is increasingly influenced with respect to its form, content, organization, or context by media symbols or mechanisms" (Hjarvard, 2013, p. 20). One example of indirect mediatization is the development of intertextual discourse between the media and other institutions in society. When it comes to the casual sexual script, people's knowledge about this script is indebted to media narratives, both fact and fiction. Notably, much of the fiction young adults are exposed to in Belgium is originally produced in the U.S., meaning that the casual sexual script in Flanders will be interwoven with media representations of American culture (cf., International Cultivation; Van den Bulck, 2012). Hjarvard argues that this form of indirect mediatization will not necessarily affect people's behavior but rather relate to "the general increase in social institutions' reliance on the media's communication resources and authority" (Hjarvard, 2013, p. 21). Consequently, Chapter

2 consists of a content analysis that aims to gain a better understanding of the casual sexual scripts as portrayed in popular U.S. television shows.

Some researchers touch briefly on the idea that media representations of sexual content possibly influence attitudes towards casual sex (e.g., Garcia et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Wade, 2017). While previous content analyses provided many insights related to the frequency of (referenced) sexual behavior and the situational context surrounding these sexual interactions (e.g., Aubrey, 2004; Bond & Drogos, 2014; Kunkel et al., 2005), relatively little is known about the *relational* context within which these sexual behaviors occur, thereby leaving the casual sexual scripts occurring in these media portrayals quite unexplored. Therefore, the main goal of the content analysis conducted in Chapter 2 is to examine which sexual behaviors (i.e., kissing, explicit sexual behavior or implicit behavior) are portrayed in popular U.S. television content and within which relational context (i.e., hookups, casual sexual relationships, or committed relationships). Moreover, the content analysis will provide more information on who engages in casual sex (i.e., demographic descriptions and motives of characters that engage in a hookup or casual sexual relationship) and characteristics of the hookup and casual sexual relationship (e.g., prior relationship between casual sexual partners, situational factors such as the amount of alcohol consumption).

Starting from Chapter 3, the focus will be shifted to location-based mobile dating applications. Mobile dating applications offer the opportunity to examine direct mediatization, which refers to "situations where formerly non-mediated activity converts to a mediated form" (Hjarvard, 2013, p. 20). This new medium has palpably expanded access to a wide range of potential (casual) partners. Hjarvard (2013) argues that in cases of direct mediatization, it is easier to establish a "before" and an "after" and examine the differences. For instance, in the case of television, it is quite difficult to find individuals who have never watched any television content as it has become an institutionalized medium. Contrarily, in the case of mobile dating applications, which are fairly new and still surrounded by some stigma, it is easier to find singles who have never used mobile dating applications. For example, Choi and colleagues (2016) found that, compared to non-users, people from Hong Kong who used dating apps for more than 12 months were more likely to report a casual sexual partner in their last sexual intercourse experience.

To understand how mobile dating technologies shape emerging adults' experiences with intimacy, the concept of affordances is used within the idea of mediatization to argue how technology frames the uses of mobile dating applications. However, the concept of affordances does not completely determine the use of technology (e.g., Schäfer, 2011) and does not fully acknowledge people's experiences (e.g., Livingstone, 2008). As users have some agency in deciding

how to interpret the object in relation to their motives (Norman, 1990), several of these studies have qualitatively examined users' motives for using mobile dating applications (e.g., Hobbs et al., 2017; Ward, 2016a). Others that quantitatively assessed Tinder motives relied on a scale developed based on homosexual users' experiences with Grindr (e.g., Ranzini & Lutz, 2017). It seems that the field lacks a validated assessment tool that can measure heterosexuals' use of mobile dating applications. Therefore, Chapter 3 will investigate the motives for using Tinder by developing and validating a Tinder motives scale by relying on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974).

From a personality psychology perspective, it is interesting to examine who exactly is drawn to mobile dating applications and whether personality traits also influence Tinder motives. Consequently, Chapter 4 will not only further validate the motives scale developed in Chapter 3 but will also allow for examining how personality is related to using Tinder for casual sex. In one of the previous sections, it was mentioned that personality psychologists repeatedly found some personality traits (i.e., agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness) to be significantly associated with engagement in casual sex and sexual risk taking (e.g., Hoyle et al., 2000; Kaspar et al., 2016). Chapter 4 will thus aid in a better understanding of the association between personality and using Tinder for casual sex.

Finally, Chapter 5 will examine how Tinder users go from swiping to romantic or sexual encounters with other users. Whereas both researchers and the general public were eager to assume that mobile dating apps would lead to an increase in casual sexual encounters rather than committed relationships (e.g., Choi et al., 2016; Sales, 2015), others concluded that such view is too pessimistic and that mobile dating applications are often used to find a committed relationship (Hobbs et al., 2017; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017). Taking into account motives for using Tinder examined in Chapter 3, Chapter 5 will be helpful in exploring how users go from swiping to meeting another person in an offline context by drawing attention to its affordances. In addition, Chapter 5 will investigate whether meeting another Tinder person in an offline context will be more likely to lead to a casual sexual encounter, a casual sexual relationship, or a committed relationship.

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CHAPTER 1. EXPLORING FLEMISH EMERGING ADULTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS AND ENGAGEMENT IN CASUAL SEX[1]

ABSTRACT

Three mixed-method independent studies, encompassing a total of 2,658 Flemish emerging adults (ages 18-29), were conducted to explore Flemish emerging adults' attitudes towards and engagement in casual sex. In the qualitative semi-structured interviews, respondents shared their casual sexual experiences and used English vocabulary in doing so. In the second quantitative study, male college students were more likely to report positive attitudes towards casual sex compared to female college students. No gender differences were found for engagement in casual sex. Finally, the results from the third quantitative study suggest that casual sexual behaviors occur both inside and outside the college campus. In fact, the odds for individuals with low education (i.e., high school or less) to engage in casual sex were significantly higher compared to the odds to engage in casual sex for non-students with high education and students. Surprisingly, the odds for female emerging adults to engage in casual sex were significantly higher than the odds for male emerging adults to engage in casual sex. The findings of these studies are discussed in light of the developmental theory of emerging adulthood.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, a considerable amount of literature has been published on casual sex. This knowledge is largely based upon empirical studies that originated in the United States (US) and mainly focused on college students' experience of casual sex. It has been suggested that casual sex (referred to as hooking up) has become a dominant feature of social life on US college campuses (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Olmstead, Pasley, & Fincham, 2013; Wade, 2017). Also outside the U.S., more and more researchers started to examine the occurrence of casual sex (e.g., Campbell, 2008 (United Kingdom); Correa, Castro, Barrada, & Ruiz-Gómez, 2017 (Spain); Farvid & Braun, 2017 (New Zealand); Fisher, Worth, Garcia, & Meredith, 2012 (Canada); Karlsen & Træen, 2013 (Norway); Kaspar, Buß, Rogner, & Gnambs, 2016 (Spain and Germany); Thongnopakun, Maharachpong, & Abdullakasim, 2016 (Thailand); Yang, Luan, Liu, Wu, & Zhou, 2011 (China)). These international studies show that the increased (reported) engagement in casual sex is a worldwide phenomenon,

[1] Based on Timmermans, E., McNallie, J., Dorrance Hall, E., & Van den Bulck, J. (submitted). Exploring Flemish Emerging Adults' Attitudes Towards and Engagement in Casual Sex.

but also highlight cultural differences. When comparing Spanish and German college students, for instance, Kaspar and colleagues (2016) found that Spanish students were more likely to report engagement in one-night stands compared to German college students.

Flemish adults also engage in casual sex. In a representative sample of 1,332 Flemish respondents who reported on their last sexual contact, 18% of singles between the ages 18 and 80 said it occurred during a "one-night stand", 47% of singles said it was with a casual sexual partner, and 33% of singles referred to their ex-partner. Especially those in the emerging adulthood age category (18-29) reported engagement in casual sex as they were most likely to be single (Buysse et al., 2013). However, being a quantitative report on sexual health in Flanders, the aforementioned study does not provide any additional information on Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sex.

Therefore, in this chapter, a broad sample of Flemish emerging adults will be explored. To empirically explore Flemish emerging adults' attitudes towards and experience with casual sex, three independent studies comprising different sample criteria and research methods will be conducted. As previous studies on this research area used primarily quantitative research methods (Farvid & Braun, 2017), a first qualitative study is warranted to explore Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sex. Second, several researchers argued that it is mainly the college environment that facilitates hooking up, thereby making first-year college students susceptible to casual sexual behavior (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). Study 2 thus encompasses a quantitative study exploring college students who just finished their first year of college regarding their attitudes towards casual sex and engagement in casual sexual behavior. Third, based on theory of emerging adulthood, we argue that casual sex is not limited to first-year college students. Empirical evidence shows that senior college students had more casual sexual experiences compared to freshmen (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012). As such, solely examining a freshmen sample would not be sufficient to better understand Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sex. In addition to age differences, gender, religiosity, sexual orientation, relationship status, education status, social class, campus culture, race/ethnicity, and substance abuse all seem to influence casual sexual behavior (e.g., Allison & Risman, 2014; Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2016; Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2015), suggesting that not all emerging adults engage equally in casual sex. Therefore, a third quantitative study examining some of those differences within a large and distinct sample of Flemish emerging adults was deemed necessary.

STUDY 1: QUALITATIVE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH EMERGING ADULTS

Method

Participants and Procedure

A convenience sample was collected by recruiting potential respondents at a local campus bar. Potential participants were informed about the purpose of the study and asked if they wanted to participate in this study at a later time that was most convenient for them. Twenty heterosexual emerging adults between the ages of 19 and 25 agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview. These interviews ranged from 13 to 32 minutes in length, with an average length of 20 minutes. Twelve women and eight men were interviewed in Dutch by a trained graduate student and eighteen of the final participants were enrolled at a Flemish university. In line with the host university's ethics guidelines, all respondents signed an informed consent form indicating that participation was voluntary and no compensation was offered.

Before starting the interview, every participant was shown a 50-second video[2] that features a party in which several male and female emerging adults are drinking alcohol and getting acquainted with one another. Two people meet each other at the party and continue their sexual intimacy in the bedroom. Although no explicit sexual content is shown, the video suggests the two people have had sexual intercourse. Meanwhile, several shots are shown of people that are kissing at the party. Finally, in the last part of the video, the girl leaves the house of the guy the next morning after he made her breakfast. This video was chosen because it features both the party scene that encourages hooking up (e.g., Wade, 2017) as well as an individual example of implied casual sexual behavior. As there is no audible conversation between the individuals that engage in any of the portrayed casual interactions, the fragment is still open to interpretation and serves as a tool to prime participants to share their own experiences related to what they perceived was shown in the video.

Participants were thus asked to describe in their own words what they saw in the video and whether they recognized these behaviors from their own environment. Using a semi-structured interview design (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), participants were then prompted to elaborate on their initial observations. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and NVivo software was used to assist in data storage, organization, and coding. Coding was done in Dutch and participants' quotes were translated to English for the comprehensibility of this chapter. Data were analyzed using a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2007), which helps understand individuals' lived

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpzZJ7xpaBY

experiences of casual sex by developing a composite description of the essence of their experiences.

Results

Casual Sexual Vocabulary

A first interesting finding of the interviews was that, after exposure to the short video, all participants used English terms to define what they saw in the video and later on in the interview when they were referring to their casual sexual experiences. When describing the behavior in the short video, almost all participants used the phrase "one-night stand," and none of the participants used the term "hookup." Overall, participants described a "one-night stand" as a sexual behavior that includes oral or vaginal sex and usually occurred between strangers. However, in some cases, the casual sexual intimacy was restricted to public kissing at a party (which was also repeatedly shown in the video). To describe this particular casual sexual behavior, participants used Flemish slang (i.e., "*muilen*", "*binnendoen*") or would later tell their friends they "*scored*" (i.e., "*scoren*") someone, instead of saying they "*hooked up*" with someone.

While this was not explicitly shown in the video, during the interviews several participants shared personal stories related to their engagement in casual sexual relationships. All participants agreed that when people have sexual interactions with one another more than once, it is a casual sexual relationship rather than a one-night stand. Two English terms were alternately used when referring to casual sexual relationships: "friends with benefits" and "fuck buddies."

Casual Sexual Experiences and Relationships

All participants recognized the behavior shown in the video and were prompted to share their experiences with associated behaviors. Three major themes emerged: (a) the role of alcohol in such behaviors, (b) the partner selection process, and resulting complications, and (c) general perceptions of the occurrence of casual sexual interactions in Belgium.

The role of alcohol. Alcohol use seemed to play an important role when it comes to facilitating casual sexual interactions. As one female participant explained:

> "It usually starts with alcohol, I mean, when I haven't had alcohol, [kissing] generally does not happen. It is not that I am not aware of what happened, but I get more relaxed when I have had some alcohol, it lowers the threshold to walk up to a guy and talk to him. […]. I don't mind kissing someone when I'm drunk, because you don't have any expectations at that moment. […]. I will not be

> disappointed if nothing comes out of it, because everyone is drunk, you know. There is nothing serious coming out of it when everyone is drunk, I guess."

In general, alcohol seems to facilitate kissing and one-night stands for the majority of participants. On the other hand, alcohol also prevents them from remembering in detail what happened during their casual (sexual) experiences, as one male participant illustrates:

> "I did not feel like walking home, so I ended [the night] at her place. […]. Actually, I don't remember if we had sex that night."

To cope with this problem of not recalling casual encounters, one female participant mentioned she made a list on her phone with the names of guys she kissed. This helped her to remember the next day which guys she kissed the night before.

In contrast to one-night stands, only a few participants referenced alcohol when describing their casual sexual relationship experiences. For one woman, the absence of being intoxicated made her cease the casual sexual relationship, as it helped her to discover the sex was not up to her standards:

> "It [sex] happened four times, but the three first times I was so drunk I don't remember anything. I even texted him the next day to ask him whether something had happened because I couldn't remember it. The fourth time, I was sober and then I realized our sex wasn't great at all. And I decided to never text him again."

It thus seems that alcohol played a significant role in the engagement of casual sexual encounters – especially those restricted to kissing – but it had less of a role in casual sexual relationships.

Partner preferences and resulting complications. A second theme that emerged was about who participants preferred to have these casual sexual interactions with and the complications surrounding these partner choices. In general, participants indicated that people engaged in a one-night stand are expected to not have any romantic feelings for the other person and should not have the intention to pursue anything further, such as a date or a relationship. Usually, the one-night stand ends early the next morning, as most participants that stayed over at someone else's place noted they just wanted to leave that place as soon as possible when waking up. Several participants noted they usually did not remember the name of the person they kissed, as there is only minor communication involved in such a minor sexual intimacy.

As described previously, alcohol was often described as a facilitator when looking for casual sex, but in some cases, social media (e.g., Facebook) and mobile dating apps (e.g., Tinder) were also helpful in finding casual sex. Although most participants said they would not keep in

touch with someone they have had a one-night stand with, it occurred in some instances. Notably, this contact is mainly focused on sexual topics, as one female participant explains:

> "The messages he [her one-night stand] texted me were quite disturbing. He asked me, because he is in the military, shall I swing by your place on Friday with a colleague while wearing our uniforms wink wink. Ahm, so you realize he thinks we are going to have a threesome, he really said he wanted to."

When elaborating on their experiences, most people said they met their casual sexual partner at a party or through mutual friends. Although most participants described a one-night stand as occurring between strangers, several female participants preferred to have a one-night stand with someone they are acquainted with:

> "Whenever I had a one-night stand, it was always with an acquaintance, it is not just a stranger you meet. […]. I just broke up with my boyfriend, our relationship was over, and you just hope that guys, because you are used to it, that a guy… You just want to be in company of another guy, because you are used to it, but nothing more. So you agree to go home with him. I told myself nothing was going to happen, I was certain about that in that given moment. And then, you know, it is a little bit a foot in the door technique. I think it's something like that. A one-night stand is something spontaneous, something unexpected. In fact, it is not always intentional even if you know the person."

In contrast to one-night stands, participants reported that their casual sexual partners were more likely to be acquaintances or friends than strangers. Additionally, some people decided to continue a casual sexual relationship with their ex-partners after they broke up. In some cases, a one-night stand eventually resulted in an ongoing series of sexual encounters. Because of the ongoing nature of these relationships, people faced complications with casual sexual relationships that were not mentioned when discussing one-night stands. Social media such as Facebook are one tool that both facilitates and complicates these relationships. As one male participant describes:

> "A friend of mine had changed my Facebook status into a relationship, and she [a girl he once had sex with] was a bit mad about that. So I texted her that I was sorry and that it was a friend who did it. And then she told me she wanted to go out and have drinks together and then after we did some [sexual] things together. Actually, that was quite funny. At first, she was mad, but then she decided to come over to my place. Now she is my fuck buddy."

Female participants, in particular, mentioned they used Facebook to keep tabs on their casual sexual partners. For example, one female participant discovered that her casual sexual partner started to tag another girl in his Facebook pictures and figured he stayed over at her place. She experienced some jealousy and decided she wanted to see him to talk things through and decided to end the casual sexual relationship.

Several other participants expressed mixed feelings about casual sexual partners. One male participant, for instance, was convinced that one of the two people involved will develop feelings for the other at some point, causing the relationship to end. Another female participant also expressed her discomfort with casual sexual relationships:

> "You either go for the relationship, or you have sexual intercourse in the context of a relationship. Or you both know this is just a one-time-only something, but I don't think friends with benefits in my experience maybe I think it doesn't work for me. But I have only had one experience, I have friends with more experience and they are satisfied with it. They have all had one such negative experience, but the next time it's better. But for me it's different, I have only had one such experience. Or maybe two, but that was a different system, that was a weird system. More oriented towards a relationship, more than friends with benefits."

As the last two sentences of the aforementioned quotation imply, some participants experience difficulties when distinguishing a casual sexual relationship from a committed relationship. Even though they all acknowledge that those two forms of relationships are different in several ways, it is not always clear when a relationship is strictly casual or starts to progress into something more romantic, as is illustrated by this male participant:

> "I think she was in between the friends with benefits and something serious. But I don't know if I believe in something like that. You know that it is going to be either something serious or it is going to end at some point. How would I define that thing in between being friends with benefits and something serious? It is something like getting together and having sex but you are not sexually involved with other people. Mainly out of respect for each other. But then you soon start to think what's the difference between a committed relationship and the thing I just described. I think it's the same as a committed relationship but without feelings. Just not being sexually involved with others out of respect. You have sex, you get together and you keep in touch when not being physically together. But no feelings."

Overall, one-night stands and casual sexual relationships tend to have different preferences for partners. The reoccurring nature of casual sexual relationships brings increased complications in regards to feelings like jealousy and blurred relational boundaries.

Perceptions of the occurrence of casual sexual interactions in Belgium. The third theme encompassed participants' general perceptions about the occurrence of casual sexual interactions in Belgium and where those perceptions originated. All participants agreed that casual kissing, one-night stands, and casual sexual relationships (i.e., friends with benefits, fuck buddies) are part of day-to-day single life, especially in the college environment. However, summer festivals and clubs were also mentioned as places where casual sexual interactions often occurred. According to one male participant, one-night stands occur more often than casual sexual relationships:

> "I often wonder whether this occurs often in Belgium, sometimes I think it can't happen that much, right? But then I talk to people and hear their stories… I think the majority has had at least one one-night stand, but I don't know about friends with benefits. 2 out of 10 singles, if I have to put a number on it. Can be totally wrong of course."

When asked about the basis for their conclusions, most participants said they witnessed it themselves and that they had friends who told them about their casual sexual experiences. Another male participant said movies gave him the impression that emerging adults often engage in casual sex. A female participant compared the occurrence of casual sexual interactions in Belgium with what she witnesses in the popular British reality program *Geordie Shore*. She explained that many people go home disappointed if they haven't kissed anyone at a party they attended. One female participant even suggested she was different than "the others," because she only had had one casual sexual relationship experience. Overall, participants were convinced that others have a lot of experience when it comes to casual sex and that these behaviors are fairly common in Belgium.

Brief Discussion

Study 1 qualitatively explored Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sex. The findings raise intriguing questions regarding why all respondents used existing terms that presumably originated in the United States to describe casual sexual behavior instead of using vocabulary from their own language. While respondents were not queried about their reasons for using English vocabulary, a potential explanation might be found in popular media discourse surrounding casual sex. For instance, popular Flemish magazines (e.g., Flair; Stroobants, 2015) and Flemish newspapers (e.g., Nieuwsblad, 2017) also adopt English terms such as "friends with

benefits" and "one-night stands" to describe relational contexts for casual sex. Moreover, U.S. produced television shows are broadcasted all over the world (e.g., De Bens & de Smaele 2001; Livingstone 2003) and Flemish emerging adults have been and continue to be repeatedly exposed to U.S. television shows, even more so with popular streaming services such as Netflix. These U.S. television shows are often supportive about casual sex for emerging adults (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). From an international cultivation perspective (cf., Van den Bulck, 2012), it could be that Flemish emerging adults learn from these behaviors and adapt terms being used to their own culture.

Second, the majority of interviewees seems to have experienced at least one one-night stand or casual sexual relationship. In addition, even if participants did not have experience with casual sex, they somehow were convinced that their behavior was an exception to the norm, as all participants indicated casual sexual interactions are omnipresent in the Belgian party scene. In accordance with previous studies on casual sex (e.g., Kiene, Barta, Tennen, & Armeli, 2009; Olmstead et al., 2013; Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011), alcohol played a significant role in the occurrence of casual sex among Flemish emerging adults. Several participants noted alcohol facilitated their casual sexual behavior and aided in coping with it. Aside from alcohol, some participants mentioned that the presence of social networking sites and mobile dating applications facilitated engagement in casual sex.

This study was certainly a first step towards a better understanding of Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sexual encounters and relationships. Yet, it does not exist without limitations. Foremost, showing the video might have primed participants to recall their casual sexual experiences that involved some form of alcohol use. The video that was shown at the start of the interview depicted a party where people were consuming alcohol and engaged in sexual interactions. It could thus be possible that this fragment has biased participants answers, thereby sharing less information about casual sexual interactions that occurred without the presence of alcohol. Second, participants were recruited at a college bar and asked to participate in an in-depth interview about their sexual experiences. It might be possible that people who feel comfortable talking about their casual sexual behavior participated in these interviews, thereby resulting in almost all participants sharing personal experiences related to casual sex. Finally, a qualitative study does not allow us to generalize findings or statistically examine perceptions of casual sex. Therefore, this study will be supplemented with quantitative data.

In studies conducted in the U.S., students generally seem to perceive college as a time to experiment with hooking up (Aubrey & Smith, 2013; Wade, 2017), as the college environment, in particular, may facilitate sexual hookups through proximity to other youth and opportunities for

socializing (Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013). In general, male students are more likely to report having had casual sex and also indicate a higher number of casual sexual partners compared to female students (e.g., Kuperberg & Padgett, 2016; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Moreover, male students are also more likely to endorse positive attitudes towards hooking up compared to female students (Aubrey & Smith, 2016). When students score high on the endorsement of the hookup culture index, they tend to think of hooking up as being fun, harmless, status-enhancing, a way to assert control and power, and a way to express sexual freedom (see Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Consequently, we hypothesize that male students are more likely to report casual sex during their first year at college and endorse more positive attitudes towards casual sex compared to female students (**H1**).

Peer comparisons also play an important role for college students regarding engagement in casual sex. Overall, students tend to overestimate their peers' casual sexual behavior (Holman & Sillars) and these peer estimates are generally higher compared to their own casual sexual behavior (Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013). This is a form of "pluralistic ignorance," a term first used by social psychologist Allport (1924) to describe what occurs when, within a group of individuals, each person believes his or her private attitudes, beliefs, or judgments are discrepant from the norm displayed by the public behavior of others. We hypothesize that both male and female students overestimate others' engagement in casual sexual behavior (**H2**). These hypotheses (**H1** – **H2**) will be examined in Study 2.

STUDY 2: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY WITH FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Method

Participants and Procedure

At the start of their second year, college students were asked about their experiences in and prevalence estimates of their peers' casual sexual behavior during their first year at a large Flemish university. Participants were randomly selected out of a list that comprised college students that completed their first year at the institution. In total, 288 students (66% women; 95% heterosexual students) participated in the study and were on average 19 years old (M = 19.15; SD = 1.01). Almost half of the sample (42%) reported to not have had sexual intercourse yet, and 36% were in a committed relationship. After completion of the survey, participants were rewarded with a €10 gift voucher. This procedure was in line with the host university's ethics guidelines.

Measures

Descriptive norms. Participants were asked whether they had participated in a one-night stand in the past 12 months. A one-night stand was defined for participants as one-time-only oral, vaginal and/or anal intercourse with someone with whom they did not have a committed relationship. Approximately 14% (n = 38) reported to have had a one-night stand in their first year at college and received a follow-up question, in which they reported to have had on average approximately two one-night stands in the past 12 months (M = 1.79; SD = 1.30). In addition, all respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of how many one-night stands a typical single male student (M = 4.50; SD = 3.36) and a typical single female student (M = 2.90; SD = 2.29) has had in the past 12 months.

Endorsement of the hookup culture index (EHCI). Participants completed the 20-item EHCI developed by Aubrey and Smith (2013). We decided to replace the word "hookup" by "one-night stand" in the Dutch translation of this scale, as participants in the interviews in Study 1 did not seem to be acquainted with the term "hookup." Responses ranged between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). Being a translation and used for the first time in that language, the factor structure was investigated using EFA with oblique rotation and a restricted number of five factors in SPSS 23. The EFA almost perfectly reproduced the intended five-factor structure, with the exception of one item (i.e., I have one-night stands to have a good time), which originally belonged to the factor "fun", but had salient loadings on the factor "harmless" instead. The five subscales had good reliability, ranging between .84 and .92 (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. *Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index (EHCI; 20 items): Factors with items, factor loadings, reliabilities, and descriptives.*

EHCI factor	Factor Loading	*a*	*M*	*SD*
Harmless		.88	4.20	1.12
A one-night stand is just a one-night stand.	.933			
One-night stands are not a big deal.	.924			
One-night stands are just for fun.	.695			
One-night stands are harmless.	.585			
I have one-night stands to have a good time.	.532			
Fun		.85	3.61	1.28
I overlook some of the questionable parts of one-night stands because it is fun.	.828			
I like one-night stands because they provide immediate gratification.	.805			
One-night stands are pleasurable.	.554			
Status		.92	2.24	1.21
Having one-night stands would make me more popular.	.943			
One-night stands would improve my status among my friends.	.895			
It would improve my reputation to have a one-night stand with someone who others find appealing.	.846			
One-night stands would be a way for me to make a name for myself.	.800			
Control		.87	3.67	1.14
A one-night stand is fun when I am in control.	.848			
I feel powerful during a one-night stand.	.800			
I feel that I can control what I want to have happen during a one-night stand	.695			
I assert my needs during a one-night stand.	.682			
Sexual Freedom		.84	3.83	1.23
College is a time to experience sex.	.824			
A one-night stand is a natural thing to do in college.	.549			
College is a good time to experiment with one-night stands.	.475			
One-night stands allow me to be sexually adventurous.	.431			

Results

Table 2 shows differences between male and female first-year college students regarding casual sexual attitudes and behavior, as well as perceptions of their male and female peers' casual sexual behavior. Approximately 16% of male students (n = 15) and 12% of female students (n = 23) reported having experienced a one-night stand in the past 12 months. Contrary to our expectation, male students did not differ from female students regarding both having experienced a one-night stand and the reported number of casual sexual partners in the past 12 months. However, as hypothesized, male students were more likely than female students to report higher scores on the endorsement of the hookup culture index, thereby partly confirming **H1**. Whereas both genders believed one-night stands are harmless, male students did so significantly more than female students. Male students were also more likely to perceive one-night stands as being fun, compared to female students. Regarding status, male students were significantly more likely to perceive the one-night stands as status enhancing compared to female students. This had a large effect size (*Cohen's d* = 1.10). Notably, however, scores for both sexes were rather low, as the mean score for male students signifies "rather disagree" and the mean for female students signifies "disagree." Whereas both sexes were rather neutral towards having control in a one-night stand, it seemed to be a bit more important to male students compared to female students. Male students also were more likely to believe one-night stands are part of the college experience compared to female students (see **Table 2**). In general, the scores for one-night stands attitude components were most likely to either fall in the "rather disagree" or "neutral" category, implying that both male and female students were not very likely to endorse positive attitudes towards engagement in one-night stands.

When reporting on the perceived number of one-night stands a typical male student and a typical female student had in the past 12 months, both male and female students overestimated these numbers, congruent with **H2**. Dependent samples t-tests showed that whereas respondents had on average approximately zero one-night stands over the past 12 months (M = .25; SD = .78), they estimated that a typical single female college student has had approximately 3 one-night stands (M = 2.92; SD = 2.29) in the past 12 months; $t(278) = -18.949$, $p < .001$; *Cohen's d* = 1.53, and a typical single male college student has had approximately 5 one-night stands (M = 4.53; SD = 3.35); $t(278) = -21.238$, $p < .001$; *Cohen's d* = 1.72. Additionally, independent samples t-tests (see **Table 2**) showed that whereas male and female students did not significantly differ in their estimates of female students' sexual hookups, female participants overestimated a typical single male students' number of one-night stands more so than did male participants.

Table 2. *Differences between male and female first-year college students regarding sexual behavior, peer perceptions, and endorsement of the hookup culture index.*

Variables	Male (N = 94)	Female (N = 281)	range	t / χ^2	df	d / v
One-night stand	16%	12.3%	0 – 1	.716[a]	1	.05[b]
Frequency past 12 months	(n = 15) 1.40 (.63)	(n = 23) 2.04 (1.55)	1 – 6	-1.52	36	.54
Estimated typical male student	3.45 (2.93)	4.94 (3.48)	0 – 15	-3.606***	283	.46
Estimated typical female student	2.80 (2.39)	2.88 (2.26)	0 – 20	-.282	283	.02
Harmless	4.48 (1.03)	4.07 (1.14)	1 – 7	2.941**	278	.35
Fun	3.98 (1.25)	3.42 (1.26)	1 – 7	3.460**	276	.42
Status	3.07 (1.20)	1.83 (.98)	1 – 6	9.12***	274	1.10
Control	3.89 (.87)	3.56 (1.23)	1 – 6	2.289*	273	.28
Sexual Freedom	4.35 (1.03)	3.58 (1.25)	1–6.25	5.041***	273	.61

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; [a] denotes reported χ^2; [b] denotes Cramer's v

Brief Discussion

In this sample, 12.3% of female students reported to have had a one-night stand in their first year at college. This finding is not congruent with the literature. In a U.S. sample of 483 first year female students, for instance, 40% reported to have engaged in a sexual hookup after their first year (Fielder et al., 2013). However, in the current study, 60% of female students reported to have had sexual intercourse (meaning that it happened within another relational context such as a committed relationship), which is more in line with existing studies in which approximately 57% of first year female students reported to have had sexual intercourse (Kenney, Thadani, Ghaidarov, & LaBrie, 2013). Based on these findings, it could be possible that in Belgium, those who enter college are still more likely to have sex within a committed relationship. This conclusion is in line with findings on U.S. college campuses (Fielder et al., 2013). However, another cultural factor that could explain this finding is that Flemish students are more likely to commute than U.S. students (Vanden Abeele & Roe, 2011). As such, Flemish students could experience more parental supervision compared to students in the U.S., thereby having fewer opportunities to engage in one-night stands, as these casual sexual encounters often are spontaneous and unplanned.

Furthermore, the results from this second study show that both male and female students generally overestimate their peers' engagement in one-night stands. Similar findings emerged in the U.S. literature (e.g., Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003). The fact that both male and female students are generally overestimating the typical students' casual sexual

behavior during the first year in college indicates that casual sex is perceived as the norm on the Flemish college campus. Similar ideas were reported in Study 1: Participants expressed feeling like the exception rather than the norm if they did not participate in casual sex.

Although male students did not differ from female students regarding engagement in one-night stands, male students were significantly more likely to endorse more positive attitudes towards one-night stands. Such findings are not surprising as women consistently report lower casual sexual desires and attitudes than men (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). One cross-cultural study showed that male college students desired larger numbers of sexual partners than female college students in every major region of the world, regardless of other influential factors such as relationship status or sexual orientation (Schmitt, 2003).

Notably, however, female students in a U.S. sample were more likely to display similar scores as their male counterparts on the harmless and control components of the endorsement of the hookup culture index (Aubrey & Smith, 2016), whereas Flemish female students significantly scored lower for all five components of the hookup culture index in the current study. A possible explanation for this might be that different definitions were used in both measures. In the U.S. study, hooking up could comprise any sexual interaction, ranging from kissing to having sexual intercourse, whereas in Study 2 a one-night stand was clearly defined as a one-time-only oral, vaginal, or anal sexual interaction. Consequently, the gender difference in Belgium implies that there might be a gender gap towards endorsement of positive attitudes towards one-night stands in Belgium. Similarly, in our in-depth interviews, none of the male respondents indicated they felt uncomfortable with their experiences or perceptions of engagement in casual sex, whereas some female participants mentioned that they would rather prefer sex with a meaningful person or indicated they felt quite dissatisfied with the one-night stand when no longer intoxicated.

Again, some limitations need to be addressed. Being limited to experiences of first-year college students in a rather small sample, some questions remain unanswered. Some argue that the college setting is atypical, thus, college students cannot truly represent the population of emerging adults (e.g., Bogle, 2007; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Claxton and van Dulmen (2013), for instance, question whether casual sex manifests in the same way in non-university populations. In a U.S. sample, emerging adults who did not complete high school reported significantly more casual sexual partners compared to students enrolled in four-year degree programs (Lyons et al., 2015). Therefore, it seems that education status also functions as an important factor when studying engagement in casual sex. Consequently, we predict that the odds for emerging adults with low education to engage in casual sex are higher compared to the odds for emerging adults with high education (**H3**). In addition, in U.S. studies, students that lived in dorms recognized hooking up

as the dominant sexual culture (Allison & Risman, 2014). Contrarily, those living with their parents reported fewer casual sexual partners (Lyons et al., 2015). Wade (2017) also noticed that at the two campuses where students were predominantly commuters, the practice of hooking up was less acknowledged compared to their peers at universities where most students lived on campus. Therefore, we argue that in Belgium, the odds for Flemish students who live on campus will be higher compared to the odds for Flemish students who live with their parents and daily commute to university (**H4**).

Therefore, a larger quantitative study, encompassing emerging adults in different life stages was essential to examine differences in emerging adults' casual sexual behavior and to better estimate the influence of factors such as college enrolment and living situation. For this third study, it is important to note that casual sex can occur within several contexts, depending on the number of casual sexual encounters (i.e., only one time vs. several times) and the relationship between the two people that engage in casual sex (e.g., strangers, acquaintances, friends or ex-lovers) (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013). Previous studies usually focused on either (sexual) hookups (e.g., Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013; Study 2 in this chapter) or casual sexual relationships (e.g., Mongeau, Knight, Williams, Eden, & Shaw, 2013), but we will include both contexts of casual sex as they are equally important in gaining a better understanding of casual sexual behaviors that occur during emerging adulthood. Engagement in ex-sex will also be included as emerging adults often continue a sexual relationship with their ex-partners (Halpern-Meeking, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2013).

STUDY 3: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY WITH EMERGING ADULTS

Method

Procedure and Participants

A convenience sample was collected using Facebook as a sampling tool. Administrators of several successful Facebook pages that attract the population of interest (e.g., confessions pages, popular magazines) agreed to share the survey link to reach a large and distinct sample of emerging adults. Facebook offers an efficient way to collect good quality self-reported data and has been successfully used for virtual sampling in previous research (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Kosinski, Matz, & Gosling, 2015). Participation was voluntary and participants did not receive any incentive for their participation.

In total, 2,350 emerging adults (66% female, 93% heterosexual; age range: 18-29; M_{age} = 22.08; SD_{age} = 2.39) completed this survey. Slightly more than half of the sample were currently

single (57%) and the majority were college students (69%). Of the non-student sample, 22% had a high school degree or less, 38% had a community college degree, and 40% had a university degree. Only 15% of the entire sample reported never having had sexual intercourse. For the majority of the sample (63%), their first time having sexual intercourse was with a serious partner in a committed relationship. Participants had on average 1 to 2 relationships (M = 1.34; SD = 1.32), and 23% had never been in a committed relationship.

Measures

Demographic variables. Participants indicated their sex (0 = male, 1 = female), age, sexual orientation (1 = heterosexual, 2 = homosexual/lesbian/bisexual), and relationship status (0 = single, 1 = in a committed relationship). Additionally, participants reported on their student status, student living situation, and education level (see results section for coding information).

Engagement in one-night stands. Participants were given a short description of a one-night stand (i.e., a one-night stand is when you have one-time-only oral, vaginal and/or anal intercourse with someone) and asked whether they have ever had a one-night stand. Slightly more than one-third (37%) of the sample reported having had a one-night stand in the past.

Engagement in casual sexual relationships. Similarly, participants were given a short description of a casual sexual relationship (i.e., a casual sexual relationship is an ongoing series of sexual encounters—including oral, vaginal and/or anal intercourse—with a stranger, acquaintance, or friend) and asked whether they have ever had a casual sexual relationship. Almost half of the sample (46%) reported to have had a casual sexual relationship.

Engagement in ex-sex. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they ever had sexual intercourse (oral, vaginal, or anal) with an ex-partner after breaking up. This was the case for 32% of the sample.

Revised sociosexual orientation inventory (SOI–R). The 5-item Likert scales for the attitude and desire components of Penke and Asendorpf's (2008) SOI-R were used. Reliability for both the attitude component (3 items, α = .81; M = 3.34; SD = 1.00) and desire component (3 items, α = .83; M = 2.74; SD = .97) was good.

Results

Binary logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine which situational factors predicted engagement in one-night stands (Model 1), casual sexual relationships (Model 2), and ex-sex (Model 3). The predictor variables of interest were student status (student vs. non-student), student living situation (on campus vs. with parents), and non-student education level (high

education versus low-education). Students indicated if they lived on campus (category 1; n = 652) or with their parents (category 2; n = 957) and non-students indicated whether they had completed higher education (= community college or university degree, category 3; n = 576) or had low education (= high school degree or less; category 4; n = 164). This information was included as a categorical variable with four categories in the binary logistic regression models. Category 1, category 2, and category 3 served alternately as reference categories to examine all potential comparisons. We controlled for sex, age, sexual orientation, relationship status, sexual attitudes, and sexual desires.

Engagement in One-Night Stands

The results in **Table 3** show that the odds of engagement in one-night stands for students who lived on campus were 1.49 times higher than the odds for students who lived with their parents and 1.67 times higher than the odds for non-students with higher education. No significant differences emerged between the odds for students living on campus and the odds for non-students with low education. Contrarily, the odds of engagement in one-night stands for non-students with low education were 1.80 times higher than the odds for students living with their parents. The odds for students living with their parents did not significantly differ from the odds for non-students with high education, yet the direction of the effect implies that the odds for non-students with high education will be slightly higher. Additionally, the odds of engagement in one-night stands for non-students with low education were 1.91 times higher than the odds for non-students with higher education.

Surprisingly, and contrary to our findings in Study 2, the odds for women to report engagement in one-night stands were 1.35 times higher than the odds for men. In addition, the odds of engagement in one-night stands increase with age (14%), being non-heterosexual (83%), having higher scores on sexual attitudes (164%) and having higher scores on sexual desires (21%). Notably, the stepwise logistic regression model showed that for every added independent variable the odds for engagement in one-night stands for male emerging adults were significantly higher than the odds for female emerging adults. However, when the independent control variable sexual attitudes was added, the odds for engagement in one-night stands for male emerging adults were suddenly significantly lower than the odds for female emerging adults. This indicates that, when controlling for the shared variance (1) between sexual attitudes and gender, and (2) sexual attitudes and one-night stands, the odds for women to engage in one-night stands are higher than the odds for men. This might suggest that, for men, sexual attitudes potentially influence engagement in one-night stands, whereas for women, there might be other factors.

Engagement in Casual Sexual Relationships

The results in **Table 3** show that the odds of engagement in casual sexual relationships for students living on campus did not significantly differ from the odds for both students living with their parents and non-students with high education. However, the odds of engagement in casual sexual relationships for non-students with low education were 2.38 times higher than the odds for students living on campus, 2.41 times higher than the odds for students living with their parents, and 2.29 times higher than the odds for non-students with high education.

Again, significant sex differences emerged. The odds of engagement in casual sexual relationships for women were 2.69 times higher than the odds for men. In addition, the odds of engagement in casual sexual relationships increased with age (10%), being non-heterosexual (56%), having higher scores on sexual attitudes (194%), and having higher scores on sexual desires (22%).

Engagement in Ex-Sex

A similar pattern emerged when examining odd differences regarding engagement in ex-sex. Again, the odds of engagement in ex-sex for non-students with low education were 1.83 times higher than the odds for students living on campus, 1.63 times higher than the odds for students living with their parents, and approximately 2 times higher than the odds for non-students with high education (see **Table 3**).

Regarding the control variables, the odds for women were 2.15 times higher than the odds for men. In addition, the odds for engagement in ex-sex increase with age (17%), having higher scores on sexual attitudes (58%), and having higher scores on sexual desires (17%).

Table 3. *Binary logistic regression models for engagement in one-night stands, casual sexual relationships, and ex-sex.*

	Model 1 One-Night Stands			Model 2 Casual Sexual Relationships			Model 3 Ex-Sex		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Sex	.30**	.11	1.35	.99***	.11	2.69	.77***	.11	2.15
Age	.13***	.03	1.14	.10***	.03	1.10	.16***	.03	1.17
Sexual Orientation	.61**	.19	1.83	.45*	.19	1.56	-.05	.19	.95
Relationship Status	-.08	.11	.92	-.08	.11	.92	.08	.11	1.08
Students Living on Campus (n = 652)									
Students Living with Parents (n = 957)	-.40**	.12	.67	-.01	.12	.99	.12	.12	1.12
Non-Students with Low Education (n = 164)	.13	.21	1.14	.87***	.22	2.38	.61**	.20	1.83
Non-Students with High Education (n = 576)	-.52**	.16	.60	.04	.15	1.04	-.08	.15	.92
Students Living with Parents									
Non-student with Low Education	.53*	.22	1.80	.88***	.22	2.41	.49*	.20	1.63
Non-Students with High Education	-.12	.17	.89	.05	.17	1.05	-.20	.16	.82
Non-student with High Education									
Non-Students with Low Education	.64**	.21	1.91	.83***	.21	2.29	.69***	.19	1.99
Sexual Attitudes	.97***	.07	2.64	1.08***	.07	2.94	.46***	.06	1.58
Sexual Desires	.19**	.07	1.21	.20**	.06	1.22	.15*	.06	1.17
Omnibus test of model	$\chi^2(9) = 496.929$***			$\chi^2(9) = 566.283$***			$\chi^2(9) = 208.567$***		
Nagelkerke R^2	.265			.291			.122		

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Brief Discussion

Regarding engagement in one-night stands, the findings of Study 3 indicate that the odds are significantly higher for students living on campus and non-students with low education compared to both students living with parents and non-students with high education, thereby confirming both **Hypothesis 3** and **Hypothesis 4**. Such findings suggest that in Belgium, the engagement in one-night stands is not restricted to the college campus, as participants that presumably never attended university and have not experienced the college campus (i.e., non-students with a high school degree or less) did not significantly differ regarding their odds of engagement in one-night stands compared to college students who live on campus. The significant difference in odds for students living on campus and those living with their parents (**Hypothesis 4**) is in line with previous findings in a U.S. sample (Lyons et al., 2015). In addition, Lyons and colleagues also found that emerging adults who did not complete high school reported significantly more casual sexual partners compared to students enrolled in four-year degree programs. While we did not examine the number of casual sexual partners, we did find that emerging adults with low education in our sample significantly differed from students regarding their odds of one-night stands (with the exception of students living on campus), casual sexual relationships, and ex-sex.

However, it is important to note that Belgium has a particular "campus culture." The large majority of Flemish students are only on campus during the week and return to their parents' home on weekends. Another significant portion of students permanently live at home and commute daily to their university (Dorrance Hall et al., 2016). The latter might experience more parental control or at least report to their parents about their whereabouts, which might make it more difficult to engage in one-night stands, as these are usually spontaneous and unplanned sexual interactions. Notably, no such differences were found between students living with their parents and students living on campus regarding their odds of engagement in casual sexual relationships and sex with an ex-partner. A potential explanation could be that these forms of casual sexual relationships often involve more planning (Jonason, Li, & Cason, 2009), thereby making it easier for students who live with their parents to also engage in casual sex within these alternative contexts.

Moreover, Flemish universities are often situated in cities (e.g., Leuven, Antwerp, Brussels), meaning that "campus life" is not restricted to only having (sexual) interactions with other students, as they often go out to bars where they can mix with non-students. It could be that non-students with high education still interact with students at universities when they both go out in the same city, thereby possibly explaining why non-students with high education and students did not significantly differ regarding their engagement in casual sexual relationships and ex-sex.

In addition, the findings of Study 3 show that non-students with low education, in particular, have higher odds to engage in casual sex within these two relational contexts. One explanation as to why non-students have higher odds to engage in a casual sexual relationship could be that universities in Belgium have a lower sex-ratio. In a cross-cultural study that also included Flemish participants, researchers found that women in lower sex-ratio societies tend to increase their mate preference standards to avoid deception by short-term relationship seeking men (Stone, Shackelford, & Buss, 2007). Regarding college enrolments in Belgium, women continue to outnumber men (Vlaamse Overheid, 2014), thereby creating lower sex ratios for women on the college campus, which might result in female college students being more likely to avoid casual sexual relationships.

However, the aforementioned reasoning leaves several questions unanswered. It does not provide an explanation as to why non-students with low education have higher odds to engage in all three forms of casual sex compared to non-students with high education, especially given the assumption that students with high education have experienced the college campus in which casual sexual possibilities often occur. This is certainly an avenue for future research. In addition, age was also significantly associated with casual sex in all three contexts, meaning that the odds to report engagement in casual sex increase with age. Being limited to emerging adults, this finding thus raises the question of whether this trend continues into adulthood, indicating that future research should also explore engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships beyond emerging adulthood, especially as a Flemish study showed that engagement in casual sex was not restricted to emerging adults (Buysse et al., 2013).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Emerging adulthood is a life stage in which individuals have to make important choices that will help shape their future lives in fundamental areas, such as their education, careers, job opportunities and romantic relationships (Nelson & Luster, 2015). It is a developmentally unique period where individuals feel like they are no longer adolescents but are not quite yet adults (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adults themselves report to experience this life stage as a time to take risks, a time to explore various possibilities presented to them, a time to prepare for adult family roles, a time of stress, a time of confusion and uncertainty (Nelson, Willoughby, Rogers, & Padilla-Walker, 2015), and a time to explore their sexual identity (Morgan, 2013). In addition, recent economic and societal developments carry increased risks and uncertainties which make it harder for emerging adults to commit and settle down (Shulman & Connolly, 2013), thereby leading to a time

of exploration in which individuals may try out different sexual relationships and experiences (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013).

Given that engagement in casual sex was certainly not restricted to college students in this chapter, the developmental theory of emerging adulthood provides an interesting framework to understand Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sex. A relatively large proportion of Flemish emerging adults reports to have engaged in casual sex within either a one-night stand, a casual sexual relationship, or sex with an ex-partner. According to Shulman and Connolly (2013), emerging adults can fulfill their sexual desires through casual sexual encounters, when not ready for commitment yet because of their professional and financial uncertainties. However, given that 36% of respondents in Study 2 and 43% of respondents in Study 3 were in a committed relationship, and some participants in Study 1 mentioned they preferred sex within a committed relationship, it seems that casual sex is not the only sexual script in Belgium. Similarly, in a U.S. study, romantic relationships are still the most common context for sexual behavior (Fielder et al., 2013). From a life-course theory perspective, Lyons and colleagues (2014) concluded that engagement in casual sex was merely a phase in emerging adults' lives. Whereas casual sex is often regarded as acceptable alternatives to committed relationships, it is still not seen as a replacement of committed relationship and emerging adults will come to a point where they actually start to long for a committed relationship (Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2014). Yet, it would be interesting to examine how these (repeated) experiences with casual sex during emerging adulthood potentially influence relationship formation and commitment in later life stages.

Interestingly, several gender differences emerged in Study 2 and Study 3. In Study 2, male students were more likely to endorse positive attitudes towards casual sex compared to female students, but did not differ regarding their reported behavior. Contrarily, in a representative Flemish sample, men were more likely to report to have had sex with a casual partner compared to women (Buysse et al., 2013). Researchers have argued that normative expectations for men and women could explain why men generally are more likely to report engagement in casual sex compared to women. In an experimental study, for instance, researchers found that these gender differences in reported sexual behavior tend to disappear when people are in a condition in which they believed lying could be detected (Alexander & Fisher, 2003). Following this reasoning, it could be that normative expectations for men and women are decreasing in younger cohorts, as 19-year-old male and female college students who reported on their casual sexual experiences during their first year at college did not significantly differ regarding their engagement in one-night stands.

Surprisingly, however, in Study 3 the odds for female emerging adults to engage in casual sex in all three relational contexts (i.e., one-night stands, casual sexual relationships, and ex-sex)

were significantly higher compared to the odds for male emerging adults to engage in casual sex in either of these three relational contexts. In the existing literature, the majority of studies either reported that male emerging adults were more likely to engage in casual sex or reported more casual sexual partners compared to female emerging adults (e.g., Buysse et al., 2013; Kaspar et al., 2016 (Spanish participants); Grello et al., 2006; Lyons et al., 2015; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011) or did not find a significant gender differences (e.g., Bisson & Levine, 2009; Correa et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2012; Halpern-Meekin et al., 2013; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Vrangalova, 2015). In a German sample, however, female respondents reported more one-night stands compared to male respondents (Kaspar et al., 2016). Moreover, in some of these studies that found that men were more likely to report casual sexual interactions, the effect sizes were very small (e.g., $d = 0.08$; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2016). Consequently, our findings related to non-gender differences in Study 2, and gender-differences in Study 3 are not that surprising. In addition, some argue that female emerging adults engage in casual sex to "evaluate a male's suitability for a long-term relationship or securing his interest so he will commit to a long-term relationship" (Cunningham & Barbee, 2008, p. 99), suggesting that future studies on Flemish emerging adults should also include motivations for engagement in casual sex rather than just the reported engagement.

Especially for casual sexual relationships, sex differences seem to be complicated as there exists a whole range of casual sexual relationships. Jonason and colleagues, for instance, found that women were less likely to participate in a booty-call relationship or a one-night stand compared to men, but no significant sex differences were found for engagement in friends with benefits (Jonason, Hatfield, & Boler, 2015). Similarly, Mongeau and colleagues (2013) found that men were most likely to report engagement in a casual sexual relationship with a strong sexual focus, whereas women were most likely to report engagement in a casual sexual relationship that was a failed transition into a committed relationship. Given the large variety of casual sexual relationships, Study 3 failed to capture this diversity. Future studies that account for this diversity might find other results that are more in line with those reported by the aforementioned studies.

Importantly, this chapter is not without limitations. First, the goal of this chapter was limited to a descriptive examination of Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sexual encounters and relationships in Belgium. As such, we cannot provide information about predictors of engagement in casual sex beyond what was anecdotally shared in the in-depth interviews. Second, self-selection participation procedures could have biased the findings in all three studies. It is plausible that individuals who feel comfortable talking about sex were more likely to participate in Study 1 or share sexual information about themselves in Study 2 and Study 3, which has

implications for generalizing findings to a broader audience. However, this might have been less the case for Study 2, as participants received a gift voucher for their participation. Additionally, due to this self-selection bias, the samples in this chapter are not representative of the population of emerging adults. Notably, we had a predominantly female sample. Third, while this study was very informative about Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sex, less is known about other age cohorts. Claxton and van Dulmen (2013) argue that engagement in casual sex during emerging adulthood may have less negative consequences for individual well-being compared to engagement in casual sex during other age periods, as casual sex may be somewhat developmentally normative during emerging adulthood because they reflect many of the main features (i.e., identity exploration and instability) of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004). Therefore, also including older – or younger – age cohorts in future studies would be fruitful, especially when examining consequences of casual sex.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of the three mixed-methods studies was to examine Flemish emerging adults' experiences with casual sexual encounters and relationships. Remarkably, Flemish emerging adults used English vocabulary when discussing their casual sexual interactions, suggesting that they might have been influenced by sexual narratives in popular media discourses. In addition, our findings suggest that the transition to college is not that impactful on Flemish students' casual sexual experiences, as only 14% of second-year college students reported engagement in one-night stands. However, in Study 3, which comprised a large sample of emerging adults, larger proportions reported to have engaged in one-night stands (37%), casual sexual relationships (46%), and sex with an ex-partner after breaking up (32%). Remarkably, the odds for students living on campus and non-students with low education to engage in one-night stands were higher compared to the odds for both students living with their parents and non-students with high education. Regarding casual sexual relationships and sex with an ex-partner after breaking up, the odds for non-students with low education were significantly higher compared to the odds of students and non-students with high education. Future studies are necessary to unravel predictors and consequences of repeated engagement in casual sex during emerging adulthood and beyond.

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CHAPTER 2. A QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CASUAL SEXUAL SCRIPTS ON THE SCREEN[3]

ABSTRACT

Several content analyses have been carried out to examine the frequency of sexual references and behaviors in television content produced in the United States. While these studies are very useful in terms of gaining a better understanding of contextual factors such as emotional and physical consequences, sexual health messages, and gender representations, they generally lack insightful information regarding the representation of casual sexual scripts. Such findings are not surprising, as the casual sexual literature has evolved impressively in the past decade. Consequently, the current study addresses this void by employing content analytic methods to measure the frequency and context of depictions of sexual behavior within nine popular television shows produced in the U.S., while taking into account the type of sexual behavior. In addition, portrayals of the typical hookup script and the typical casual sexual relationship script in which these sexual behaviors often occur were analyzed. Overall, the televised casual sexual scripts seem to deviate from research findings related to casual sexual scripts.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, an expanding body of literature has investigated the prevalence and consequences of engagement in casual sex (e.g., Bersamin et al., 2014; Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). In this literature, researchers often either focused on casual sex (1) within a single sexual encounter such as (sexual) hookups or one-night stands (e.g., Campbell, 2008; Kaspar, Buß, Rogner, & Gnambs, 2016; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000) or (2) within a casual sexual relationship (e.g., Mongeau, Knight, Williams, Eden, & Shaw, 2013; Wentland & Reissing, 2014). Whereas casual sexual encounters often occur between strangers (Garcia & Reiber, 2008), casual sexual relationships can occur between friends (i.e., friends with benefits), acquaintances (i.e., fuck buddies, booty calls), or ex-partners (Mongeau et al., 2013; Wentland & Reissing, 2011).

Although these two contexts can sometimes be intertwined (e.g., a hookup can be the start of a fuck buddy relationship), they often have their own set of rules regarding to what is expected to occur regarding sexual (and other) interactions within this context and what is not (cf., Sexual

[3] Based on Timmermans, E., & Van den Bulck, J. (revised and resubmitted). Casual Sexual Scripts on the Screen: A Quantitative Content Analysis. *Archives of Sexual Behavior.*

Script Theory; Atwood & Dershowitz, 1992; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Consequently, it is important to differentiate between the casual sexual script for casual sexual encounters (i.e., the hookup script) and the casual sexual script for casual sexual relationships (i.e., the casual sexual relationship script). While several researchers have hinted that television as a cultural storyteller partly aids in creating these casual sexual scripts (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Garcia et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010), relatively little is known about how these casual sexual scripts are portrayed in popular television shows. When reviewing existing content analyses related to sexual behavior on the screen (e.g., Aubrey, 2004; Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005), we noted that these content analyses often do not focus on the relational context within which sexual behaviors can occur (i.e., within a committed relationship versus a casual sexual encounter or relationship), nor do they differentiate between the aforementioned casual sexual scripts.

Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, we will map frequencies of sexual portrayals within its context on a number of popular U.S. television shows. The occurrence of sexual behaviors within hookups and casual sexual relationships will be contrasted with the occurrence of sexual behavior within more socially accepted romantic constructs such as traditional dates and romantic relationships, while taking into account the type of sexual behavior. This will be examined for three different genres relevant to the purpose of this chapter. Secondly, we aim to gain insights in the hookup script and the casual sexual relationship script frequently portrayed in popular fiction. According to Sexual Script Theory, casual sexual scripts on the screen provide its viewers with a certain set of rules to follow when wanting to engage in the behavior themselves (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Analyzing cultural sexual scripts shown in popular television shows will thus aid in understanding what is to be expected within these casual sexual scripts.

CASUAL SEXUAL SCRIPTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Researchers focusing on cognitive psychology argue that individuals enter relationships with mental structures, which are often referred to as schemas or implicit theories of relationships, that provide them with coherent assumptions about how relationships typically function (Baldwin, 1995; Fletcher, 2008). Likewise, sexual behavior is learned from culturally available schemas or scripts that define what "counts as sex, how to recognize sexual situations, and what to do in relational and sexual encounters" (Kim et al., p. 146). In 1969, Simon and Gagnon argued that sexuality and sexual behavior are social processes and proposed Sexual Script Theory as a theoretical framework to investigate sexual behaviors and attitudes. These sexual scripts operate at three levels: the cultural, the interpersonal, and the intrapsychic (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). The cultural script defines cultural and social norms and values about sexual behavior, whereas the

interpersonal script is focused on the interaction between individuals. The intrapsychic script covers thoughts and feelings about the individual's own sexual behavior and desires (Wiederman, 2015).

Throughout this chapter, we will focus on the cultural sexual scripts, as they are the societal norms and narratives that provide guidelines for sexual behavior such as the number of sexual partners that is appropriate, the variety of sexual acts, motives for casual sex, and suitable emotions and feelings (e.g., Mahay, Laumann, & Michaels, 2000; Sakaluk, Todd, Milhausen, Lachowsky, & URGiS, 2014). Over the past decade, we have witnessed several changes regarding the cultural sexual script. For example, a change in cultural scripts emerged when oral sex was placed before intercourse in the hierarchy of intimacy and more and more young adults started to report engagement in anal sex (e.g., Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Leichliter, Chandra, Liddon, Fenton, & Aral, 2007). Another example constitutes the loss of virginity, which is no longer required to happen with a partner one feels emotionally close with. For one-third of respondents in U.S. college samples, for instance, their first time having sexual intercourse was during a sexual hookup (Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Orenstein, 2016).

The cultural script related to the sexual double standard about premarital sex also seems to have changed. In their meta-analysis, Wells and Twenge (2005) concluded that attitudes towards premarital intercourse became more permissive and feelings of sexual guilt decreased between 1943 and 1999. Similarly, female emerging adults seem to feel more and more comfortable engaging in casual sex. According to a longitudinal study on U.S. female freshmen, 34% reported that they had had oral or vaginal sex with a casual partner before the start of freshmen year and these numbers increased to 57% by the end of freshmen year (Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013). Notably, however, women still express their frustration with being judged more negatively for their engagement in casual sexual relationships compared to men (e.g., Weaver, MacKeigan, & MacDonald, 2011). Consequently, some researchers argue that this older version of the sexual double standard, in which women are judged more harshly than men for having premarital sex, has been replaced by a newer version of the sexual double standard in which women who seek sexual pleasure outside of committed relationships are judged more harshly than men who do so (Petersen & Hyde, 2010; Sakaluk et al., 2014). This new sexual double standard might even influence the physical pleasure of women by reducing the quality of sex for women that engage in casual sex. Armstrong and colleagues (2012) argue that doubts about women's entitlement to pleasure in casual sex keep women from asking to have their desires satisfied and keep men from seeing women as deserving of their attentiveness in casual sexual encounters (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012).

In the last decade, more and more researchers noticed a new cultural script dominating the Northern American college campus, which they refer to as the hookup script (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, & Ward, 2009; Holman & Sillars, 2012; Wade, 2017). In the study conducted by Holman and Sillars (2012) college students generally described a hookup as a spontaneous sexual encounter that mostly occurred in a context where friends were present and alcohol facilitated the hookup. Overall, the hookup script is perceived as less formal than the widely recognized conventions in the dating script. For instance, within the dating script, the man is supposed to initiate the date, pick up the woman, and pay for the date expenses. The woman is not supposed to initiate any action but decide whether she will accept or reject the man's advances. This is quite stressful and financially costly for the man, but on the other hand also gives him more control as the initiator and decision-maker (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008; Illouz, 1997). Contrarily, both men and women can initiate a hookup (Paul & Hayes, 2002). Additionally, a date is usually arranged, whereas a hookup is often an unplanned consequence of a social gathering (e.g., a party or festival; Bogle, 2008; Holman & Sillars, 2012; Chapter 1). Researchers also argue that hookups generally involve less STI protection, because it involves a greater variety of sexual intimacies (e.g., oral and anal sex), more unplanned sexual encounters, and individuals experience disinhibition from alcohol or arousal (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; MacDonald & Hynie, 2008). Whereas hookups were initially defined as one-time-only sexual encounters (Paul et al., 2000), emerging adults also seem to include definitions of casual sexual relationships (e.g., friends with benefits) when discussing hookup experiences (e.g., Epstein et al., 2009), meaning that it is possible to hook up multiple times with the same person.

However, when a hookup results in an ongoing series of sexual interactions between two individuals, it is generally referred to as a casual sexual relationship. These casual sexual relationships differ from hookups, in that they provide sexual partners with more freedom to sexually explore each other. Consequently, casual sexual relationships are characterized by higher levels of kissing as well as intimate touching and anal sex compared to hookups (Jonason, Li, & Richardson, 2011). Getting to know each other personally seems not to be a necessary component within the hookup script, as the desired communication within a hookup is more likely to be described as nonverbal (e.g., physical flirting, eye contact, dancing) (Kratzer & Aubrey, 2016). Contrarily, casual sexual relationships are more likely to create expectations of emotional involvement, as it allows for other kinds of interactions besides the sexual (Mongeau et al., 2013). However, compared to committed relationships, casual sexual partners still perform less committing acts like talking and handholding in their casual sexual relationship (Jonason et al., 2011). Several studies showed that between thirty and fifty percent of emerging adults had had at

least one casual sexual relationship during college, with men being more likely to report engagement in casual sexual relationships compared to women (e.g., Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Bisson & Levine, 2009; Mongeau et al., 2013; Owen & Fincham, 2011).

While some studies suggest that the dating script and casual sexual scripts coexist (e.g., Brimeyer & Smith, 2012), others argue that these dates are usually a result of a casual sexual encounter (Reid, Elliot, & Webber, 2011; Wade, 2017). Not only dates, but even committed relationships are often preceded by casual sexual behavior within the context of a (sexual) hookup (e.g., England, Shafer, & Fogarty, 2008; Rhoades & Stanley, 2014). Yet, these casual sexual scripts might not be the ideal way to find a romantic partner, as researchers found that the sooner relationships become sexual, the greater their odds of failure (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011; Willoughby, Carroll, & Busby, 2014). While the possibility of a romantic relationship is often a reason to start a casual sexual relationship (e.g., Furman & Hand, 2006; Mongeau et al., 2013), only a small minority of casual sexual relationships lead to committed relationships (Bisson & Levine, 2009). Even when this happens, young adults who were in a casual sexual relationship prior to becoming exclusive reported lower relationship satisfaction when compared to young adults who were not (Owen & Fincham, 2012).

Moreover, many researchers worry that those engaging in casual sexual experiences and relationships are not fully aware of the mental and physical consequences casual sexual behaviors might hold (e.g., Wade, 2017). The predominant concerns about engagement in casual sex revolve around negative mental outcomes (Bersamin et al., 2014; Grello et al., 2006; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011) and physical danger such as contracting a sexually transmitted infection, sexual violence, and/or unintended pregnancy (e.g., Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2014; Garcia et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2006). Researchers also found that emerging adults generally believe that others are having a higher number of hookups and feel more comfortable with hooking up than they do themselves (Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013; Napper, Kenney, & LaBrie, 2015). More than ever, emerging adults now believe that casual sex is something they are supposed to have (Wade, 2017). Emerging adults without personal experience do not seem to have difficulties in identifying and differentiating between variations of casual sexual relationships (Wentland & Reissing, 2014), suggesting that casual sex has become part of the culturally accepted sexual script. Several researchers already argued that television can provide narratives that partly influence these culturally accepted casual sexual scripts (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Kaspar et al., 2016). Consequently, it might be helpful to examine how television has portrayed casual sexual behavior over the past decade to better understand these casual sexual scripts.

CASUAL SEXUAL SCRIPTS ON THE SCREEN

The past two decades, portrayals of (referenced) sexual behavior in popular television content have received quite some research attention. Several of these content analyses concerned the frequency of sexual talk and sexual behaviors shown on the screen (e.g., Bond & Drogos, 2014; Callister, Stern, Coyne, Robinson, & Bennion, 2011; Collins et al., 2004; Signorielli & Bievenour, 2015), whereas others focused on exactly how those sexual behaviors were presented. Researchers pointed out the poor representations of sexual health on the screen (e.g., Hust, Brown, & L'Engle, 2008), examined the physical and emotional consequences of televised sexual behaviors (e.g., Aubrey, 2004; Eyal & Finnerty, 2009), considered how often these portrayed sexual references and sexual portrayals occurred in the workplace context (Lampman et al., 2002), or were interested in the heterosexual script (Kim et al., 2007). Notably, however, the large majority of these content analyses does not provide any information related to the *relational* context in which sexual behavior occurs.

When comparing findings from content analyses on soaps conducted in 1985, 1994, and 1996, Greenberg and Woods (1999) showed that sexual activity was most commonly portrayed or talked about as occurring between two unmarried people. Remarkably, significantly fewer portrayals or sexual references of intercourse between married couples occurred. Yet, based on the coded information, it is not clear whether unmarried intercourse refers to premarital sex between committed partners or casual sexual intercourse between strangers or people in a casual sexual relationship. Kunkel and colleagues (Kunkel, Eyal, Donnerstein, Biely, & Rideout, 2007) also provide some limited information on the prior relationship between the characters that engaged in sexual intercourse in television programs broadcasted between 1998 and 2002. The majority of characters had an established relationship (53% in 1998, 50% in 2000, and 61% in 2002). A smaller amount of characters were acquainted (28% in 1998, 25% in 2000, and 19% in 2002) and only a small number of characters were basically strangers (10% in 1998, 16% in 2000, and 7% in 2002). In another study, Kunkel and colleagues (2005) showed that the number of characters who have just met and have sex together again increased to 15% of all sexual intercourse scenes in between 2004 and 2005.

Similarly, Fisher and colleagues (2004) included relationship status in their coding system when studying television content between 2001 and 2002. They concluded that sexual intercourse most often occurred between unmarried couples and that in more than half of those instances characters were in some type of "casual sex relationship." Notably, however, examples of an "ongoing casual sex relationship" provided by the authors such as "an affair" or "a prostitute with a regular client" (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2004, p. 535) are quite different from the casual

sexual relationships described in the previous section. In addition, it is not clear whether the relationship status categories "past history of romantic involvement," "had met before in a nonromantic context," and "had just met" were also included in this concept of casual sexual relationship as provided by Fisher and colleagues (2004).

Whereas these studies already indicate that casual sexual scripts do occur in U.S. television shows, they do not provide any further information related to these casual sexual scripts. For instance, such findings raise the question whether and with what frequency such sexual encounters are repetitive and lead to a casual sexual relationship or remain casual non-repetitive sexual encounters. In addition, based on Sexual Script Theory, one might argue that it is not necessarily merely the exposure to sexual content, but rather the relational context of sexual content that might influence its viewers. Within a committed relationship, sexual intercourse is generally perceived as a normative and even desired behavior (Hicks, McNulty, Meltzer, & Olson, 2016). Consequently, when a sexual act is shown between two individuals in a serious, committed relationship, viewers receive a different message than when exposed to a sexual act between two individuals in either a casual sexual relationship or a hookup. For instance, when viewers often see sexual intercourse within the context of a hookup or casual sexual relationship, they might perceive such casual sexual context as normative for engaging in sexual intercourse. When studying such sexual portrayals, researchers also argue that a good understanding of "sexual behavior" in the media is essential. The large majority (80%) of sexual behavior in the media is generally restricted to physical flirting and romantic kissing (Bond, 2014). When focusing solely on sexual intercourse, Kunkel and colleagues (2005) found that only 10% of the 261 programs broadcasted in 2005 explicitly portrayed intercourse behavior. Such findings thus raise the question which sexual behaviors are typically shown within these casual sexual scripts. Therefore, the first research question is formulated as follows:

> **RQ1**: Is the type of sexual behavior shown in popular U.S. television programs related to the relational context of the sexual behavior?

Second, it is important to note that sexual content is not equally spread over all genres or channels but might accumulate in some and be absent in others (Bilandzic & Buselle, 2012). Empirical studies showed that effects related to exposure to sexual content vary by genre (e.g., Gottfried, Vaala, Bleakley, Hennessy, & Jordan, 2013). Additionally, several content analyses demonstrated that some genres are more likely to show sexual portrayals compared to others (e.g., Bond & Drogos, 2014; Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2005, 2007). Fisher and colleagues (2004), for instance, found that comedy-drama is the genre with the highest prevalence of sexual content and talk. When comparing comedy series, drama series, movies, news magazines, soap operas, talk

shows, and reality shows, Kunkel and colleagues (2007) found that the comedy genre had the largest average number of scenes per hour containing sex, but the average level of sexual behavior in scenes was slightly higher for the drama genre compared to all other genres. Furthermore, these genres do not only differ in the frequency of sexual portrayals, but also in the context related to these sexual portrayals. Comedies, for instance, have significantly fewer risk and responsibility messages compared to shows that fall into the drama category (Gottfried et al., 2013). It could thus be that these genres also differ with regards to the relational context of the sexual behaviors. Therefore, the second research question is formulated as follows:

> **RQ2**: Is the relational context of the sexual behavior related to the genre of the popular U.S. television programs?

The next research questions are related to the casual sexual scripts. As mass media play an important role in conveying cultural scenarios (Wiederman, 2015), television, together with other media, plays a crucial role in influencing the cultural script, which in turn impacts the interpersonal and intrapsychic scripts. In reality, substance use is often an important motivator to engage in hooking up (e.g., Grello et al., 2006; Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2014; Wade, 2017). In the college environment, college students will often gather together in large groups, consume a decent amount of alcohol and pair off as the evening progresses (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). Race and class also seem to guide the hookup script, as **studies found that** mainly white and middle-class students report engagement in casual sex, whereas Hispanic, African American, and Asian American students generally report significantly less hookup behavior (e.g., Allison & Risman, 2014; Eaton, Rose, Interligi, Fernandez, & McHugh, 2016; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Wade, 2017). Several studies found that emerging adults perceive hooking up as being fun, status enhancing, a reflection of one's sexual freedom, harmless and without emotional commitment (e.g., Aubrey & Smith, 2013; Lyons et al., 2014). Such findings thus raise the question how this hookup script is portrayed in popular U.S. television shows (**RQ3**).

Regarding the casual sexual script, Mongeau and colleagues (2013) differentiated seven types of casual sexual relationships based on the nature of the relationship and interactions between partners, including history of, or desire for, committed relationships. The first category, *true friends,* reflects the typical friends with benefits relationship in which close friends interact in varied contexts and have sex on multiple occasions. The second category, *just sex,* reflects the typical fuck buddy relationship, in which casual sexual partners interact almost exclusively to arrange and carry out sexual interaction. The third category is referred to as *network opportunism* and entails acquaintances who perceive each other as a back-up plan: only if both partners do not find another sexual partner for the night, they will decide to end up with each other. As these two are

usually part of the same network, there is more interaction involved than just sex (Mongeau et al., 2013). Desiring a romantic relationship is often a motive to engage in casual sex (e.g., Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Regan & Dreyer, 1999), others agree on a casual sexual relationship if that is "all they can get" because their romantic feelings are not mutual (Karlsen & Træen, 2013). Consequently, the next three categories of Mongeau and colleagues (2013) are related to the desire for a committed relationship: *successful transition in a committed relationship*, *unintentional transition in a committed relationship*, and *failed transition in a committed relationship*. Finally, as ex-partners also often continue a casual sexual relationship (Halpern-Meeking, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2012), the final category reflects the *transition out of a committed relationship* (Mongeau et al., 2013). As there are so many categories of casual sexual relationships, one might wonder which of these casual sexual relationships is most often portrayed on the screen. Consequently, the final research question is formulated as follows:

RQ4: What is the casual sexual relationship script in popular U.S. television shows?

DATA AND METHOD

Program and Episode Selection

Some previous content analyses relied on convenience samples of television programs that were designed based on U.S. prime time hours to analyze sexual exposure (e.g., Aubrey, 2004; Kim et al., 2007). Others coded content that was aired on different U.S. television channels throughout the day until 11 pm (e.g., Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2007). Importantly, however, fiction produced in the U.S. also holds a dominant position in countries outside the U.S. (e.g., De Bens & De Smaele, 2001; Livingstone, 2003), meaning that U.S. television show are often viewed outside the U.S. (e.g., Brown et al., 2013; Eyal, Raz, & Levi, 2014; Miller et al., 2016) and international media effects studies related to sexual attitudes and/or behavior often include exposure to U.S. television content in their measurement of television viewing (e.g., Vandenbosch, & Eggermont, 2014; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). Additionally, with the worldwide popularity of streaming services (e.g., Netflix), more and more individuals are now provided with the opportunity to watch shows at a time that is most convenient. The majority of series on such streaming services are produced in the United States, with the result that viewers all over the world are exposed to American culture as shown in popular television programs. As there is no possibility of any interaction between a cultural product produced in the U.S. and the culture exposed to that product (e.g., European cultures), one often-heard assumption is that American shows potentially have the power to shape beliefs and norms congruent with content shown in their productions

(cf., International Cultivation; Van den Bulck, 2012). Analyzing internationally popular U.S. television shows related to this topic is thus important in terms of globalization and Americanization (Eyal et al., 2014).

For the purpose of this chapter, three television genres that have been shown to repeatedly portray sexual behaviors (e.g., Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2007) and have a storyline that is strongly focused on relationship issues were selected (i.e., situational comedy, drama, and drama comedy). Next, we chose three different programs within every genre. To select shows within those genres, programs aired between 2000[4] and 2015 were chosen, as the term hooking up only emerged in academia after 2000 (Paul et al., 2000). We aimed to include shows that are known for their portrayals of abundant and vivid sex scenes (i.e., Californication and Girls; Iftene, 2016) and were pioneers with regard to cultural changes related to sexuality (e.g., Sex and the City, Orange is the New Black; Arthurs, 2003; Jensen & Jensen, 2007). In addition, we aimed to include U.S. produced television shows that have reached a worldwide popularity (e.g., Grey's Anatomy, The Big Bang Theory; Adalian, 2015). We also wanted to include shows depicting emerging adults (e.g., Gossip Girl, Girls), as emerging adults are often subjects of studies examining casual sexual behaviors (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Heldman & Wade, 2010). While this sample includes shows that are no longer in production, such as Friends and Sex and the City, it is important to note that these shows are still very popular, especially among international audiences (Brown et al., 2013; Sternbergh, 2016).

Since previous research noted that media effects are dependent on whether the program content is perceived as being realistic or not (Taylor, 2005), it was proposed that viewers may not strongly identify with situations that are not set within this world (e.g., Game of Thrones) or characters that possess supernatural powers (e.g., Vampire Diaries), despite the frequency of sexual content within such programs. In addition, series not set within the current time period were not included in our sample (e.g., Downton Abbey, Vikings). Popular movie and television shows databases (e.g., IMDb) and streaming services (e.g., Netflix) were consulted to ascertain whether (1) the television shows we selected were in the popularity rank and (2) whether they could be viewed in other countries through streaming services such as Netflix or are still being broadcasted internationally (despite not being currently in production in the U.S.).

Regarding episode selection, every first and last episode of every season of every show was selected as recommended by Manganello, Franzini, and Jordan (2008). According to Manganello

[4] In case the show started before 2000, we only coded seasons that started after 2000. This was the case for two television programs (i.e., Friends, and Sex and the City).

and colleagues (2008), sexual behaviors are most likely shown in the first and last episode of the season, to create suspense and capture the viewers' attention. Consequently, for the purpose of this chapter, we decided to act upon this recommendation. Additionally, one to four episodes, depending on the episode length and the number of seasons coded, were selected using a random number generator. When episode length was significantly longer compared to other programs and/or genres, not all seasons were analyzed (i.e., Gossip Girl[5], and Grey's Anatomy) in order to have a comparable amount of total hours coded per genre. In total, 200 episodes were subjected to this content analysis, resulting in 102.65 coded hours of television content. Coders distinguished a total of 4,301 scenes, of which 9.14% contained a form of sexual behavior (see **Table 4** for more information on selected television programs and genres).

[5] In the case of Gossip Girl we decided to only code those episodes in which the main characters have reached emerging adulthood.

Table 4. *Information on selected television shows and genres in sample.*

Genre/Show	Seasons (Episodes) coded	Total hours coded	Total number of scenes	Scenes with sexual behavior	Sexual behavior within Hookups	Sexual behavior within Casual Sexual Relationships
Situational Comedy	16 (88)	**32.94**	**1376**	**124 (9.01%)**	**23**	**15**
Friends (2000-2004)	7-10 (24)	10.33 (620 min)	375	45 (12%)	3	8
The Big Bang Theory (2007-2015)	1-8 (40)	13.83 (829.5 min)	489	35 (7.16%)	11	1
New Girl (2011-2015)	1-4 (24)	8.78 (527 min)	512	44 (8.59%)	9	6
Drama	12 (48)	**38.37**	**1787**	**94 (5.26%)**	**38**	**14**
Grey's Anatomy (2005-2009)	2-7 (18)	13.17 (790 min)	690	24 (3.48%)	11	3
Gossip Girl (2007-2012)	3-5 (18)	12.6 (756 min)	630	45 (7.14%)	20	6
Orange is the New Black (2013-2015)	1-3 (12)	12.6 (756 min)	467	25 (5.35%)	7	5
Comedy-Drama	15 (64)	**31.34**	**1138**	**175 (15.38%)**	**60**	**42**
Sex and the City (2000-2004)	3-6 (20)	10.23 (614 min)	450	63 (14%)	11	21
Californication (2007-2014)	1-7 (28)	13.28 (797 min)	406	83 (20.44%)	39	13
Girls (2012–2015)	1-4 (16)	7.83 (470 min)	282	29 (10.28%)	10	8
Total	**43 (200)**	**102.65**	**4301**	**393**	**121**	**71**

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this chapter was a sexual behavior coded at the scene-level, which was divided into three different categories, being (1) *passionately kissing and intimate touching*, (2) *explicit oral/vaginal/anal sex*, and (3) *implied oral/vaginal/anal sex*. The coding scheme identified four different contexts in which such sexual behaviors could occur: (1) *hookups*, (2) *casual sexual relationships*, (3) *dates*, and (4) *committed relationships*. Seen our interest in the casual sexual scripts, coders provided more contextual information on sexual behaviors that occurred within hookups and within casual sexual relationships.

Coders identified hookups based on the definition by Garcia and Reiber (2008, p. 193), in which a hookup is "a spontaneous sexual interaction in which: (1) the individuals are explicitly not in a traditional romantic relationship with each other (i.e., not dating, not boyfriend/girlfriend), (2) there are no a priori agreements regarding what behaviors will occur, and (3) there is explicitly no promise of any subsequent intimate relations or relationships." Other similar behaviors, such as the popular term one-night stand, were included in this definition. Furthermore, coders provided more information on characteristics of the hookup (i.e., sex of the initiator, prior relationship between hookup partners, hookup outcome[6], any form of aggression during the hookup, any explicit or implicit use of contraception during the sexual act, and alcohol or drug influence), demographic information on the characters that performed the sexual behavior (i.e., sex, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status), characters' displays of permissiveness (i.e., character is portrayed as someone who enjoys sex without love, character avoids commitment, and character cheats on partner), and motives for participating in the hookup (i.e., enhancement motive, conformity motive, social motive, coping motive, material motive, and amotive; see Kenney, Thadani, Ghaidarov, & LaBrie, 2013; Vrangalova, 2015a). In short, the enhancement motive includes ways in which the hookup might enhance well-being (e.g., sexual gratification, fun, feeling attracted). The conformity motive includes reasons such as being lonely, feeling insecure and wanting to be desired. The social motive is related to the presence or absence of the desire for a committed relationship, whereas the conformity motive is related to peer pressure and acceptance (Kenney et al., 2013). Vrangalova (2015a) also distinguished a material motive (e.g., receiving money or taking revenge through the hookup) and the amotive (i.e., for those who were

[6] The hookup outcome could not be coded on the scene-level. Coders were encouraged to code the hookup outcome on the season-level and verify their decision by collecting more information on the characters through internet sources.

under influence of alcohol or drugs or forced to engage in casual sex and thus did not have a motive of their own).

For casual sexual relationships, the type of casual sexual relationships was coded, following an existing typology on casual sexual relationships, which simultaneously served as definitions of casual sexual relationships (Mongeau et al., 2013). It was impossible for coders to code the type of casual sexual relationship at the scene-level or in some cases even at the episode-level. Consequently, coders were instructed to code the casual sexual relationship at the season-level. Coders also provided more information on characteristics of the casual sexual relationship (i.e., any form of aggression during the sexual behavior, any explicit or implicit use of contraception), demographics of characters that engaged in casual sexual relationships (i.e., sex, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationships status) as well as characters' displays of permissiveness (i.e., character is portrayed as someone who enjoys sex without love, character avoids commitment, and character cheats on partner).

Intercoder Reliability

Twenty-five undergraduate and two graduate students underwent extensive training to learn how to implement the coding system, which included measurement of variables and coding rules made before the observations as recommended by Neuendorf (2002). Undergraduate students served as coders blind to the purpose of the original study. Pilot coding occurred on several episodes before coding the actual sample to identify and resolve problems with the coding scheme. As coders had difficulties in separating scenes, a word sheet was designed in which coders separated scenes and indicated which scenes needed further coding. This procedure resulted in more focus while coding, increased accurate separating of scenes, and facilitated feedback, which was regularly provided during the training phase to all coders. After the coding scheme was modified on the basis of these practice rounds and once coders reached consensus on separating scenes, the coding of the episodes was independent and coders started coding episodes belonging to the dataset of this chapter.

Using a random number generator, 43 episodes from the original 200 episodes were randomly selected and subjected to reliability analyses. Subsequently, 21.5% of the sample was coded by two coders, conform the recommended 20% (Neuendorf, 2002). Intercoder reliability was computed for this subsample and was measured through Krippendorff's alpha (kalpha) coefficient (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Although it was previously stated that kalpha should be around .80 (Neuendorf, 2002), Hayes and Krippendorff (2007, p. 87) argue that "if the reliability standard were relaxed to $\alpha_{min} = 0.700$, the risk of accepting the data as reliable when they are not

is quite low, q = 0.0125." Consequently, we decided to delete all variables with kalphas lower than .70 from all analyses.

Overall, the coders agreed well on the unitizing of the episodes into scenes (α = .998). Reliabilities for the variables on the scene-level were: context of sexual behavior (α = .81) and type of sexual behavior (α = .84). Reliabilities for variables further coded on the hookup-level were: sex initiator of the hookup (α = .83), prior relationship between hookup partners (α = .90), hookup outcome (α = 1.00), alcohol or drug influence (α = .78), any explicit or implicit use of contraception during the sexual act (α = 1.00), demographic variables such as character's sex (α = .97), age (α = .79), ethnicity (α = 1.00), sexual orientation (α = .79), relationship status (α = .85), the character's enjoyment of sex without love (α = .82), and the character's material motive to engage in the hookup (α = .79). The following variables were deleted from all analyses due to low kalpha values: any form of aggression during the hookup (α = .67), the character is portrayed as someone who avoids commitment (α = .40), the character cheats on partner because of the hookup (α = .69), the enhancement motive (α = .51), the conformity motive (no cases were coded as conformity motive), the social motive (α = .47), the coping motive (α = .48), and the amotivate (i.e., a complete lack of intentionality for the casual sexual behavior; α = .66).

Reliabilities for variables on the casual sexual relationship-level were: type of casual sexual relationship (α = .89), any form of aggression during the sexual behavior (α = 1.00), any explicit or implicit use of contraceptives during the sexual behavior (α = 1.00), demographic variables such as character's sex (α = 1.00), age (α = 1.00), ethnicity (α = 1.00), sexual orientation (α = 1.00), relationship status (α = .70), the character's enjoyment of sex without love (α = .70), the character's portrayal as someone who avoids commitment (α = 1.00), and whether the character cheats on partner because of the hookup (α = 1.00). No variables were deleted from analyses related to the casual sexual relationship script, as there were no kalpha values reflecting unreliability.

RESULTS

RQ1: Is the Type of Sexual Behavior Shown in Popular U.S. Television Programs Related to the Relational Context of the Sexual Behavior?

In total, 393 scenes (9.14% of all scenes) were coded that portrayed some act of sexual behavior. When examining the context of those sexual behaviors, the results showed that almost one-third (*n* = 121; 31%) of these sexual behaviors occurred within a hookup context. Additionally, 18% (*n* = 71) of these sexual behaviors happened within a casual sexual relationship. In contrast, half of those sexual behaviors occurred within a committed relationship or date (*n* = 201; 45% committed relationship; 6% date).

When taking into account the type of sexual behavior, a chi-square test showed that the large majority (n = 152; 76%) of the sexual intimacies within a romantic relationship concern portrayals of passionate kissing and intimate touching, whereas 77% (n = 56) of explicitly portrayed oral, vaginal, or anal sexual intercourse occurred within a hookup (n = 33; 45%) or a casual sexual relationship (n = 23; 32%) context. When it comes to implied sexual behavior, romantic relationships (n = 32; 42%) and hookups (n = 31; 40%) barely differed, whereas this number was notably smaller for casual sexual relationships (n = 14; 18%). This association between the type and the context of sexual behavior appeared to be significant, χ^2 (4) = 39.589; p < .001. For portrayals of passionate kissing and intimate touching, the standardized residual was significant for hookups (z = -2.1) and romantic relationships/dates (z = 2.5), implying that significantly more passionate kissing and intimate touching occurred within a romantic relationship/date, while significantly less passionate kissing and intimate touching occurred within hookups. In contrast, the standardized residual for explicit portrayals of oral, vaginal, or anal sex was significant for hookups (z = 2.2), casual sexual relationships (z = 2.7), and committed relationships/dates (z = -3.3), signifying that such behaviors were significantly more likely to occur within hookups and casual sexual relationships, and less likely to occur within romantic relationships/dates. No significant differences were found for implied sexual behavior, but the z values for romantic relationships (z = -1.2) and hookups (z =1.5) suggest a similar trend as the one observed in explicit portrayals of intercourse (see **Table 5**).

RQ2: Is the Relational Context of the Sexual Behavior Related to the Genre of the popular U.S. Television Programs?

Hookups were proportionately most often portrayed in the drama genre (n = 38; 40%), followed by the comedy-drama genre (n = 60; 34%), whereas only 19% (n = 23) of portrayals of sexual behaviors in situational comedy occurred within a hookup context. A chi-square test confirmed that hookups (z = -2.5) appeared less often in the situational comedy genre compared to the other genres, χ^2(4) = 27.795; p < .001. Regarding casual sexual relationships, sexual behaviors within this context most often occurred in the comedy-drama genre (n = 42; 24%), whereas they were not that often portrayed in the drama genre (n = 14; 15%) nor in the situational comedy genre (n = 15; 12%). Although there were no significant differences, the z-value (1.8) of the comedy-drama genre suggested a trend towards being more likely to occur compared to the other genres, whereas the opposite was true for the comedy genre (z = -1.6). Finally, sexual behaviors were most often showed within a committed relationship for situational comedies (n = 86; 69%), whereas these frequencies were a bit lower for the drama genre (n = 42; 45%) and the comedy-drama genre (n = 73; 42%). The significant chi-square test (χ^2 (4) = 27.795; p < .001) indicated that sexual

behaviors within a committed relationship ($\bar{x} = 2.8$) appeared more often in the situational comedy genre compared to the other genres (see **Table 5**).

Table 5. *The association between the type of sexual behavior, the context of sexual behavior and the three genres.*

		Context Sexual Behavior			
Genre	**Type of Sexual Behavior**	**Hookup**	**Casual Sexual Relationship**	**Committed Relationship**	**Total**
Situational Comedy	Kissing and Touching	13	11	69	93 (75%)
	Explicit Sex	0	0	0	0
	Implied Sex	10	4	17	31 (25%)
	Total (%)	23 (19%)	15 (12%)	86 (69%)	124
Drama	Kissing and Touching	22	7	36	65 (69%)
	Explicit Sex	6	3	0	9 (10%)
	Implied Sex	10	4	6	20 (21%)
	Total (%)	38 (40%)	14 (15%)	42 (45%)	94
Comedy-Drama	Kissing and Touching	22	16	47	85 (49%)
	Explicit Sex	27	20	17	64 (37%)
	Implied Sex	11	6	9	26 (15%)
	Total (%)	60 (34%)	42 (24%)	73 (42%)	175
Total	Kissing and Touching	57	34	152	243
	Explicit Sex	33	23	17	73
	Implied Sex	31	14	32	77
	Total	121 (31%)	71 (18%)	201 (51%)	**393**

RQ3: What is the Hookup Script in Popular U.S. Television Shows?

Across the nine television programs, 121 hookup cases were analyzed. First, the character's demographics were examined. Slightly more females (53%) than males (47%) engaged in hooking up behavior. Most hookup partners (63%) were in the adult age category (26-45-year-olds), followed by the emerging adulthood category (18-25-year-olds, 28%). Only a small minority of hookup partners were teenagers (5%), or older adults (46-65-year-olds; 1%). Almost all characters that engaged in a hookup were Caucasian (96%) and heterosexual (88%). For half of the characters, it was clear they were single while participating in the hookup (54%). Contrarily, 49 characters

(20%) were in a committed relationship while hooking up and thus cheated on their significant other, and 9 characters (4%) were involved in a casual sexual relationship. For 54 characters (22%), the relationship status was unclear based on the episode. Most characters that hooked up were portrayed as enjoying sex without love (56%). Male and female characters did not significantly cheat more or less on their partners $\chi^2(2) = .873$, $p = .65$. Contrarily, less male characters than expected (13%) did "not enjoy having sex without love" ($z = -2.1$), $\chi^2 (1) = 11.434$, $p < .01$. No significant findings emerged for females characters that did not enjoy sex without love (34%) and for female (51%) and male (62%) characters that enjoyed sex without love.

Next, we looked at the relationship between the hookup partners prior to their engagement in the hookup. In 32 cases (26%) the hookup partners were strangers. In 25 cases (21%) they were acquainted, in 22 cases (18%) they were friends, and in 20 cases (17%) the hookup partners were previously romantically involved. In the smallest category of cases (12%), hookup partners were colleagues or neighbors. For 8 cases the coders indicated the prior relationship was unknown based on the episode. Secondly, we examined the outcome of the hookup. Conform the literature, in the majority of cases (69; 57%) the hookup did not lead to anything. However, in 17 cases (14%) the partners became friends, in another 17 cases (14%) the hookup partners commenced a casual sexual relationship and in 18 cases (15%) they even established a committed relationship. When paying attention to which character typically initiated the hookup, female characters (35%) were more likely to initiate the hookup compared to male characters (25%). In 19 cases (16%) both characters initiated the hookup and in 31 cases (26%) it was not clear which character initiated the hookup. Only in 2% of the sexual behaviors within the hookup context, the characters explicitly used or implicitly referred to any forms of contraception. In 18% of the hookup cases, at least one character was under influence of drugs or alcohol, indicating that being under influence does not necessarily facilitate hookups on the screen.

RQ4: What is the Casual Sexual Relationship Script in Popular U.S. Television Shows?

In total, 71 sexual behaviors occurred within a casual sexual relationship in the nine television programs. Given that casual sexual relationships occur between two people and almost all characters (92%) were heterosexual, male characters (49%) and female characters (51%) did not differ regarding their engagement in casual sexual relationships. Interestingly, characters engaging in a casual sexual relationship were mostly main characters (71%), compared to secondary characters (29%). In line with the hookup script, a large majority of characters were Caucasian (88%) and 26-45-year-olds (77%). Approximately one fifth of characters (21%) were emerging adults (18-25-year-olds) and only two characters were older than 45. Two-thirds of characters

(66%) were portrayed as someone who enjoys sex without love, but solely 25% avoided commitment. Only three characters cheated on their significant other because of the casual sexual relationship. Interestingly, men and women did not differ when it comes to enjoying sex without love (χ^2 (1) = .377, p = .587) or avoiding commitment (χ^2 (1) = .517, p = .551).

In most of the cases (n = 23; 32%), the casual sexual relationship was a result of two characters that transitioned out of a committed relationship, also commonly referred to as "ex-sex." In 15 cases (21%), the casual sexual relationship was restricted to just sexual activities, whereas 12 cases (17%) portrayed a typical friend with benefits relationship in which the characters were true friends and did not expect any romantic relationship out of the casual sexual relationship. Contrarily, in 21 cases (30%), at least one of the partners was hoping the casual sexual relationship would evolve into a romantic relationship. Yet, this transition was successful in only nine cases, resulting in 12 casual sexual relationships classified as failed transition in a committed relationship.

DISCUSSION

Several researchers have expressed their concern regarding the amount of sexual portrayals in television content (e.g., Garcia et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Notwithstanding, sexual intercourse within a committed relationship is generally perceived as a normative and even desired behavior (Hicks et al., 2016), indicating that such concerns are relatively superfluous as long as sexual behaviors occur within a committed relationship. The results of this content analysis suggest that casual sexual experiences and relationships are almost as frequently shown in popular television programs as sexual behaviors within more traditional committed relationships. This is in line with previous findings in content analyses related to prior relationship or relationship status (e.g., Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2007). However, when taking into account the type of sexual behavior, hookups, and casual sexual relationships consist mostly of explicit portrayals of sexual intercourse, whereas sexual behaviors within a committed relationship or date are mainly limited to passionate kissing. Such portrayals might give viewers the impression that when wanting to have intercourse, they should look for it in a casual sexual encounter or relationship. In reality, however, sex in the context of a relationship is more likely to occur than sex in the context of a hookup (Fielder et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the television genre seems to play an important role when it comes to examining sexual behavior within its context. The situational comedy genre, for example, had no explicit portrayals of intercourse and in less than one-third of the cases implied sex or kissing occurred within a hookup or casual sexual relationship context. Notably, the situational comedy had the largest number of sexual behaviors that occurred within a romantic relationship compared

to drama and comedy-drama. However, the majority of these sexual behaviors were limited to kissing. Comedy-drama, on the contrary, had the largest proportion of sexual behaviors within casual sexual relationships and the largest proportion of explicit sexual portrayals. Finally, the drama genre had the largest proportion of hookups. Interestingly, situational comedy had more cases of implied sex compared to drama and comedy-drama. Again, more than half of those portrayals of implied sex occurred within a romantic relationship for situational comedy, whereas the opposite was true for the drama genres and comedy-drama. Such findings thus stress the importance of genre when wanting to study attitudes or behavior related to exposure to sexual television content. Whereas the situational comedy genre might not be that detrimental when it comes to creating a hookup script or casual sexual relationship script, drama - and comedy-drama in particular - might have a stronger influence on its viewers due to their promotion of casual sex. However, as we only included three television programs per genre, it is not recommended to generalize our findings to other programs within the same genre. While this content analysis discovered an interesting trend across these three television programs per genre, more content analyses are necessary to examine the reliability and generalizability of this trend.

For the third research question, the hookup script was analyzed across the three genres. Initially, hookup partners were defined as strangers who do not hold any expectations towards relational outcomes (Garcia & Reiber, 2008). Yet, according to this content analysis, only in less than one-third of hookup cases, hookup partners were strangers. Similarly, while previous research emphasizes the pervasiveness of alcohol use within hookups (e.g., England et al., 2008; Wade, 2017), only in 18% of the cases at least one hookup partner was under the influence of alcohol and drugs. The use of contraception barely occurred in the analyzed scenes portraying a sexual behavior within the hookup context. This is in line with findings from a content analysis by Kunkel and colleagues (2007), who concluded that topics related to sexual risks and responsibilities remain infrequent overall.

Additionally, in 43% of the hookup cases, the hookup partners remained in contact, thereby evolving their relationship into either a romantic relationship, casual sexual relationship or friendship. Developing a friendship (e.g., Eaton et al., 2016) or wanting a committed relationship (Bradshaw et al., 2010) are often classified as motives and/or risks for hooking up. Similarly in the casual sexual relationship script, in 30% of the analyzed cases, at least one of the two characters involved was hoping the casual sexual relationship would evolve into a committed relationship. In reality, however, few casual sexual relationships actually lead to a committed relationship. For example, a study on friends with benefits relationships showed that on average, only 10% of respondents eventually became romantically involved with their casual sexual partner (Bisson &

Levine, 2009). When frequently exposed to these casual sexual scripts on the screen, individuals might, as Wade (2017) suggests, indeed perceive casual sex as a way to eventually obtain a committed relationship.

Moreover, the heterosexual script, in which women are more likely to seek commitment whereas men try to avoid it (e.g., Kim et al., 2007), does not seem the case for the televised hookup script, as female characters are also enjoying recreational sex on the screen. These findings are in line with a qualitative content analysis on the comedy-drama series Sex and the City (Markle, 2008). Female characters in the televised hookup script were also more likely to initiate a hookup compared to their male characters. Although this content analysis did not include consequences of the casual sexual scripts, several researchers argue that hooking up has negative psychological consequences in real life, especially for women (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Campbell, 2008; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Fisher, Worth, Garcia, & Meredith, 2012; Grello et al., 2006; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Contrarily, research on casual sexual relationships suggests engagement in casual sexual relationships does not hold the same outcomes, as for both men and women the magnitude of positive emotional reactions about casual sexual relationships clearly surpassed the negative emotional reactions (Owen & Fincham, 2011). Moreover, not all studies found significant associations between casual sexual behavior and well-being (e.g., Eisenberg, Ackard, Resnick, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009; Vrangalova, 2015b) or instead found positive associations with well-being (e.g., Vrangalova & Ong, 2014; Vrangalova, 2015a).

Only a small amount (23%) of the 96 regressions Vrangalova (2015a) conducted were statistically significant, with the majority of them leading to higher instead of lower well-being. Surprisingly, even, she found that women experienced higher and men experienced lower well-being after hooking up. It could be that, as women are repeatedly exposed to casual sexual scripts on the screen in which they witness that women can enjoy recreational sex as well, their intrapsychic scripts have gradually changed over time and due to this change they will experience less negative emotions related to their casual sexual experiences. Importantly though, a content analysis is merely an attempt to form an idea about the televised hookup script and does not allow us to make any predictions about effects on those exposed to the televised casual sexual scripts. Nonetheless, this content analysis provides a basis for identifying messages to be examined in experiments and quantitative surveys (Slater, 2013). Therefore, additional studies applying these research methods are needed to gain a better understanding of the impact of these cultural messages concerning these casual sexual scripts that are disseminated worldwide through popular television shows originated in the United States.

Regarding the casual sexual relationship script (**RQ4**), the results showed that sexual behaviors most frequently occurred between ex-partners, indicating that ex-sex is often shown on the screen. Casual sexual relationships offer ex-partners the possibility to continue sexual interactions even after breaking up (Mongeau et al., 2013), a behavior that is not that uncommon, as half of emerging adults who break up continue sexual interactions with their ex-partners (Halpern-Meekin et al., 2012). Remarkably, sexual behavior within casual sexual relationships most often occurred within the comedy-drama genre. Characters engaging in such casual relationships were predominantly main characters, suggesting that such on/off-again relationships occur between main characters over seasons as being part of the storyline. Indeed, Hank and Karen (i.e., Californication), Carrie and Big (i.e., Sex and the City), and Hannah and Adam (i.e., Girls) were couples in the analyzed series that often break up but continue to have sexual interactions. This way, casual sexual relationships do not only replace committed relationships but also serve as a transition between the exclusivity of a romantic relationship and a total termination of the relationship. Yet, at the end of the series, these characters usually end up together (e.g., Carrie and Big in Sex and the City; Markle, 2008), which thus might create romantic beliefs when it comes to the engagement in casual sexual relationships, in which casual sexual partners come to believe that they are destined to be together. Consequently, they might be more likely to cling to each other instead of moving on to a new relationship. However, future research is warranted to point out whether television creates unrealistic expectations towards casual sexual relationships.

Finally, based on our findings regarding the televised casual sexual scripts, the field seems to need additional research on casual sexual experiences and relationships that is not solely focused on college students but also includes (older) adults. Although we tried to include series that focused on characters in emerging adulthood (i.e., Gossip Girl and Girls), the majority of series featured characters in their late twenties and thirties or even forties. In a more representative sample of television shows, researchers also found that most characters involved in portrayals of sexual behavior were aged 25 or older (e.g., Kunkel et al., 2007). According to Schwartz (2010), Americans still hold a deep-rooted ambivalence about teens and young adults desiring sexual pleasure outside the bounds of intimate relationships, which could explain why there are fewer portrayals of those younger than 25 engaging in casual sex. However, it is important to note that our sample included several television programs with main characters in between their thirties and fifties (e.g., Sex and the City, Californication). It might thus be that series targeted at a younger age group (e.g., those broadcasted on Disney Channels) or reality dating series which often include participants between the ages of 18 and 30 (e.g., Are you the one; Ex on the beach) portray a different hookup or casual sexual relationship script.

CONCLUSION

By providing a fresh view on portrayals of casual sexual scripts on the screen, these findings set the stage for media effect studies interested in the association between television exposure and attitudes towards and behavior in casual sexual experiences and relationships. Casual sexual terms that originated in the U.S. (e.g., *one-night stands* and *friends with benefits*) are now also part of popular vocabulary in several European countries (e.g., Karlsen & Traeen, 2013; Chapter 1). Therefore, it makes sense to assume that televised scripts in U.S. television shows can get implemented in cultures outside the United States (cf., Van den Bulck, 2012). Thereby, the findings of this content analysis raise the question whether we should worry about the prevalence of casual sexual experiences and relationships on the screen, as casual sexual behaviors are almost as frequently shown on television as sexual behaviors within more culturally acceptable contexts (i.e., committed relationships). In addition, viewers exposed to these shows get the impression that intercourse is a sexual behavior belonging to casual sexual relationships rather than committed relationships, as the televised portrayals of the latter are merely centered on kissing.

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CHAPTER 3. DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE TINDER MOTIVES SCALE (TMS)[7]

ABSTRACT

Although Tinder was initially designed as a dating application, not much is known about actual motives for using this new medium. Consequently, this chapter aimed to develop and evaluate a new scale that assesses Tinder motives by relying on 3,262 participants. Four studies were conducted: one qualitative interview study in the United States (Study 1: N = 18) and three quantitative studies in Belgium (Study 2: N = 1,728; Study 3: N = 485; and Study 4: N = 1,031). The resulting Tinder Motives Scale (TMS) consists of 58 items and shows a replicable factor structure with 13 reliable Tinder motives, which are discussed in light of the Uses and Gratifications Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, an expanding body of literature started to examine mobile dating applications. At first, these studies were mainly limited to applications targeted at a homosexual population such as Grindr (e.g., Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015). Other studies employed a too broad definition of online dating in which mobile dating applications were perceived as part of online dating sites (e.g., Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). However, mobile dating applications are distinct from online dating sites in several ways, as will be illustrated with the case of Tinder.

First, in contrast to many online dating sites, Tinder is free and the account set-up takes only a few minutes. User information on the Tinder profile is fairly limited: it is based on a maximum of six photographs, an optional 500 character description and some additional information linked to the Facebook account such as mutual friends, and interests (Duguay, 2017). Because Tinder is linked to the user's existing Facebook account, it has the ability to show information as completed on the Facebook profile such as job description, education level, similar interests and common Facebook friends. This might encourage users to engage in less deception, a behavior that occurs repeatedly in online dating sites (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008).

Second, whereas the matching process on online dating sites includes complicated algorithms based on personality, interests, and preferences, Tinder's matching process rather

[7] Based on Timmermans, E., & De Caluwé, E. (2017). Development and validation of the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS). *Computers in Human Behavior, 70*, 341-350. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.028

emphasizes the importance of physical appearance and mutual attraction since interaction choices are solely based on the other user's picture, a short bio, mutual Facebook friends and interests, as well as distance. Accordingly, Tinder users might even be more likely to objectify potential partners what could undermine their willingness to commit to one of them compared to online dating site users (Finkel et al., 2012).

Third, while online dating sites are often accessed at home, Tinder can be accessed on the go, in a bar or at a party. As a consequence, mobile dating applications offer the ability to meet face-to-face within 5 minutes, bringing online interactions closer to offline places and relationships (Blackwell et al., 2015). Contrarily, it often takes online daters a couple of weeks or months before they meet face-to-face in the offline world (Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, & Felt, 2008).

Finally, research has shown that online dating is especially prevalent among middle-aged adults, often looking for long-term, serious relationships (Stephure, Boon, MacKinnon, & Deveau, 2009), while young adults are more likely than any other age group to use mobile dating apps. According to Pew Research, 22% of emerging adults (18-to 24-year-olds) report using mobile dating applications in 2016, compared to 5% in 2013 (Smith, 2016). During emerging adulthood, young people regularly move in and out of being in a relationship and are often involved in casual relationships (Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, & Gordon, 2003). In addition, researchers assumed that certain smartphone apps might play a significant role in the change in sexual standards on college campuses (e.g., Bersamin et al., 2014). However, when asked about actual dating behavior, one-third of American online daters admitted to never have gone on a date with someone they met on a dating site or mobile dating application (Smith & Anderson, 2016). Such findings raise the questions what other motives people have for using mobile dating applications if not wanting to meet someone in an offline context. A theoretical framework that provides more insight in motives for using mobile dating applications such as Tinder is the Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G).

The U&G framework focuses on the active role of the media user who utilizes media to satisfy a specific social or psychological need (Rubin, 1993). Characterizing users as active, discerning, and motivated in their media use and selection allows for a better understanding of differing behaviors, outcomes, and perceptions. Katz and colleagues (1973, 1974) highlight the recursive relationship between user expectations and practices by drawing a distinction between concepts that are antecedents to behavior (i.e., gratifications sought or motives, the focus of this chapter) and those that are consequents of behavior (i.e., gratifications obtained). While needs are gratified by media, these gratifications in turn construct needs, which implies users will again rely on media to gratify these needs (Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974; Katz, Gurevith, & Haas, 1973).

For instance, when a Tinder user with a sexual motive obtains several sexual encounters through Tinder use, the Tinder user will be more likely to continue Tinder usage to satisfy this need.

As the increasing development of new media present people with more media choices, studying motives for using these new technologies becomes more crucial within the media use research, especially when those new media require higher levels of interactivity from users (Ruggiero, 2000). Using U&G as a framework for understanding individual motives for Tinder use is advantageous for at least three reasons. First, U&G has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new communications medium (Ruggiero, 2000). Accordingly, numerous studies on new media and technology have employed a U&G approach as an organizing theoretical framework. A quantitative study on online dating, for example, distinguished seven motives for using online dating sites and noticed that demographics play an important role when it comes to studying motives. Regarding the user's sex, for instance, women were more likely to use online dating sites for social purposes but less likely to use online dating sites for casual sex compared to men (Clemens, Atkin, & Krishnan, 2015). Second, the U&G allows for a holistic approach, in which researchers can employ a quantitative U&G methodology more frequently in conjunction with qualitative methodologies. For example, Gudelunas (2012) qualitatively explored gay men's motives for online social networks and stresses the importance of a thorough examination of different media platforms, as respondents in his focus groups were very clear about the different uses and purposes of each Social Networking Site (e.g., Facebook) and application (e.g., Grindr) used. Gudelunas (2012) concluded that the primary uses of Facebook and Grindr for gay men in his study were centered on accumulating sexual networks rather than increasing social capital. Third, relying on the U&G to examine motives recognizes the interactive nature of the mobile application Tinder (Katz et al., 1973).

Based on previous research findings, we believe that the U&G perspective could be extended to yield useful information as to why individuals are using mobile dating applications. Scholars applying the U&G framework found motives for media use to be better predictors of psychosocial outcomes than merely the time spent on the medium (e.g., Shen & Williams, 2011). From a U&G perspective, one could thus argue that it is not simply the existence of mobile dating applications such as Tinder that facilitate casual sexual behaviors, but rather the (sexual) motive that leads to the use of Tinder.

Therefore, our research question explores which motives drive individuals to use Tinder and we aim to develop a psychometrically sound scale that allows to assess these motives. To obtain this aim, four studies will be conducted: one qualitative interview study in the USA (Study 1: N = 18) and three quantitative studies in Belgium (Study 2: N = 1,728; Study 3: N = 485; and

Study 4: N = 1,031). In the qualitative interviews (Study 1), participants will be asked to elaborate on their motives for using Tinder to create an initial item pool. Next, in Study 2, this item pool will be tested and an open-ended question will be added to quantitatively investigate Tinder motives. In Study 3, items developed in Study 1 and 2 will be subjected to psychometric analyses to finalize the development of the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS). Finally, Study 4 will be designed to examine internal and construct validity of the final factor structure.

STUDY 1: QUALITATIVE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND MOTIVE SCALES' SCREENING

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants (N = 18) were undergraduate students between 18 and 24 years old enrolled at a large mid-western research university in the United States. In total, six female students and twelve male students were interviewed. Interview length varied from 12 to 52 minutes with an average length of 34 minutes. Respondents could participate in the study through a recruitment system used in undergraduate communication courses at the research institution. The study received approval from the research ethics board and participants received course credit for their participation in the study.

A semi-structured interview design was developed to allow participants to talk about their Tinder use, guided by a number of prompts which invited participants to elaborate on their initial observation. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. NVivo software was used to assist in data storage, organization, and coding. The responses collected from Tinder users were coded using thematic analysis, which "is a method used for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 79).

Measures

Tinder Motives Scale: Item compilation procedures. Two procedures were used to create Tinder motive items, in order to obtain a broad coverage of Tinder motives. More specifically, aside from qualitative in-depth interviews we also relied on existing U&G scales of other media, to create Tinder motive items.

Results

Across the 18 in-depth interviews, the thematic analysis resulted in eight themes regarding motives for using Tinder. One of the predominant motives regarding Tinder use was using Tinder as a tool for *socializing* (n = 17). Many participants attributed their interest in using Tinder to its

ability to connect people. For example, some participants noted the app made it easier to meet new people, broaden one's social network and make friends.

The second most cited motive by the majority of participants (n = 15) was using Tinder because of *social pressure*. One male participant noted that especially during spring break he had the feeling that everyone was using Tinder. In addition, Tinder seems to be popular in the classroom as well. As another male participant reports: "You could just walk to class and you will see everyone using Tinder and people you don't even know swiping left or right." Aside from using Tinder because everyone uses it, some participants felt pressure from friends to use the app and one female participant, for instance, admitted she never installed the app on her phone but her roommate did it for her.

Twelve of the 18 participants also discussed how the need for *social approval* led them to use the application. Remarkably, several participants described Tinder as an "ego-booster" or a "self-confidence booster". This Tinder motive is clarified in the following quote by a male participant:

> "You know, on a daily basis you don't hear too much from other people just to know, that, you think someone is attractive and you like that and to know they think you are attractive as well and you have seen that you match before you even started a conversation."

Similarly, twelve of the 18 participants talk about *entertainment* as a motive for using Tinder. This entertainment seeking can be translated in either individual/personal use or social use. When seeking personal entertainment, participants refer to Tinder as "a fun app" and something to use "just for fun." Aside from using Tinder when alone, Tinder can also be used while being with friends. One male participant explains "it started off as a joke in my fraternity", while another female participant refers to Tinder as a group activity in which "a lot of my friends will all sit around and we'll like judge the pictures kind of thing."

A bit more than half of participants (n = 10) would use Tinder to *pass time*. A female participant acknowledges she would regularly swipe right before going to bed. Another male participant explains he would use Tinder mainly when bored, even in class.

Although Tinder was officially designed for dating purposes, not all participants seem to be actively looking for a relationship on the application. In fact, less than half of participants (n = 8) admit to use Tinder for *relationship seeking* purposes.

Aside from seeking out potential partners on Tinder, the application can also help with *information seeking*. Tinder comes in handy when wanting to know who uses Tinder and thus who is single, as explained by a female participant:

> "Tinder made me realize who was single, like when I go out to places, because I mean, so when I would go out to ahmm, like, if I would go to the fraternities, I would see those guys and know like which ones are single, which ones aren't, which I would still talk to."

Finally, some participants also confessed to use Tinder to increase their *sexual experience* (*n* = 6). As one male participant puts it: "I use Tinder to find someone to hook up with, a one-night stand or something." Interestingly, especially male participants (*n* = 5) referred to hooking up as a motive for using Tinder.

Tinder Motives Scale: Initial Item Pool

In total, eight motives for using Tinder were identified: socializing, social pressure, social approval, entertainment, pass time, relationship seeking, information seeking, and sexual experience. These motives were then compared to existing U&G scales for other media (e.g., Clemens et al., 2015; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). All motives found in the interviews were congruent with factors in existing U&G scales, with the exception of social approval. Therefore, new items were developed for social approval based on quotes from interviewees (e.g., several participants mentioned getting an "ego-boost" from using Tinder, which resulted in the item "I use Tinder to get an ego-boost"), whereas existing items of other U&G scales were adapted for the other motive themes. A study on online dating reported the motives "relationship", "intercourse", "social", and "peer pressure/status" (see Clemens et al., 2015) which are related to themes found in our in-depth interviews, being respectively "relationship seeking", "sexual experience", "socializing", and "social pressure". Another study on Internet Motives (see Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), mentions motives such as "information seeking", "pass time", and "entertainment", with the latter two being in line with what Clemens et al. (2015) refer to as "distraction". Consequently, a mixture of items from these two studies was adapted for scale creation. These procedures resulted in an initial item pool of 42 items, all starting with "I use Tinder…".

STUDY 2: ITEM AND FACTOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE TINDER MOTIVES SCALE

Method

Participants and Procedure

Overall, 1,728 Flemish Tinder users (64.3% females; 92.2% heterosexuals; age range: 18-67, M_{age} = 22.66; SD_{age} = 4.28) completed (completion rate = 85.42%) the survey including the

item pool of 42 items. When a respondent skipped more than half of the survey, the case was categorized as incomplete and deleted from the sample. Given that respondents could skip questions, some missing data needs to be reported for the 42 TMS items: 4.7% of the sample had less than 20 missing items, whereas 6.4% had more than 20 missing items. We compared the means and covariances of all TMS variables using Little's (1988) MCAR-test. This test tests MCAR against MAR. Hence, if it speaks for MCAR it means that MCAR is preferred against MAR. This Little's MCAR test produced a normed χ^2 (χ^2/df) of 1.04, $p > .30$, indicating that the data were likely missing completely at random (Bollen, 1989). Consequently, it was a statistically valid method to apply the listwise deletion procedure (SPSS default option in factor analysis), meaning that these cases were excluded from the factor analysis, but included in descriptives and reliability analyses. A large majority of participants (87.7%) were emerging adults (age range: 18-25), compared to 12.3% adults (age range: 26-67). Almost two-thirds of the sample reported to be single (61.3%), 12.7% of the sample was in a casual sexual relationship (e.g., friends with benefits) and 35.1% of the respondents was in a committed relationship[8].

Participation was voluntarily and participants did not receive any incentive for their participation. The main medium used for this sampling method was Facebook, a social networking site that has been successfully used for virtual sampling in previous research (e.g., Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Bhutta, 2012) and a good way to reach Tinder users, since Tinder is automatically linked to the Facebook account and it is impossible to have a Tinder account without having a Facebook account as well.

Measures

Tinder Motives Scale: Item compilation procedures and structure. The initial item pool (42 items) created in Study 1 (based on both qualitative in-depth interviews and screening of existing U&G scales) was used in order to further examine motives for using Tinder in Study 2. Additionally, to obtain a comprehensive coverage of Tinder motives and further complement the initial item pool, an open question was added that encouraged participants to think about other reasons for using Tinder.

All items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). This initial list of 42 items, conceptually classified in eight motives – being Socializing (5 items), Social Pressure (4 items), Social Approval (6 items), Entertainment (5 items), Pass Time (5

[8] Participants were asked if they were currently using Tinder (n = 1,113) or ever used Tinder (n = 615). Of currently Tinder users, 77% is single, 15.7% in a casual sexual relationship and 18.1% in a committed relationship.

items), Relationship Seeking (7 items), Information Seeking (4 items), and Sexual Experience (6 items) – was subjected to psychometric analyses.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analyses

The factor structure of the item pool of 42 items was investigated using exploratory factor analyses (EFA) in SPSS 23. We rotated factors using an oblique transformation based on our assumption that the factors would be correlated. Eight eigenvalues with a value greater than 1 were extracted: 8.70, 5.25, 3.59, 2.63, 2.17, 1.64, 1.29, 1.05. Together, the factors explained 62.64% of the variance. As Comrey and Lee (1992) refer to .45 as a "fair" cut-off point, items with low loadings (< .45) were deleted, as explained below.

The factor structure did not perfectly reproduce the intended structure. Factor eight, for instance, did not have any salient factor loading > .45 and only reflected several smaller secondary loadings of items that had clear salient loadings on different other factors. The item "I use Tinder for fun", for instance, had a salient loading on the factor "Pass Time/Entertainment", whereas the item "I use Tinder to see how desirable I am" had a salient loading on the factor "Social Approval".

Nevertheless, five out of eight factors were congruent with the intended structure (Socializing, Social Pressure, Social Approval, Information Seeking, and Sexual Experience), but also a new factor appeared (renamed as "Pass Time/Entertainment") encompassing four of the five items from Pass Time and four of the five items from Entertainment. Thus, the two items with low loadings (< .45) were deleted. Likewise, Relationship Seeking retained only six of the seven intended items that had salient factor loadings; hence this item with a low loading (< .45) was deleted. Given that in total three items were deleted, the remaining item pool included 39 items.

The initial Cronbach's alphas of the seven motive item sets (including 39 items) ranged between .68 and .92. Due to an unacceptable low internal consistency, the item sets "Social Pressure" (α = .68) and "Information Seeking" (α = .68) were not tenable. The four items that belonged to the factor Information Seeking were deleted, as reliability was not acceptable for this factor. However, the four items belonging to Social Pressure were not deleted as answers to the open question (see under) suggest that Social Pressure is an important motive for using Tinder and might need an augmented number of items to increase internal reliability. In sum, a total of 35 items remained in the item pool, categorized within six item sets: Socializing (5 items), Social Pressure (4 items), Social Approval (6 items), Pass Time/Entertainment (8 items), Relationship Seeking (6 items), and Sexual Experience (6 items).

Thematic Analyses of the Open Question

Ninety-nine participants (64.6% female; M_{age} = 23.53, SD_{age} = 5.64) gave one reason as answer to the open question that prompted them to elaborate on other reasons for using Tinder that they did not recognize in the initial 42 motive items. Nine of them gave two reasons for using Tinder, resulting in a total of 108 reasons. Based on thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006), five new themes emerged and a total of 35 new items were created as explained below.

Twenty participants noted that they mainly used Tinder out of *curiosity*, either towards the app or towards potential matches. Moreover, 14 participants remarked they used the application in order to improve their *flirting or social skills*. Tinder also seems to be an interesting tool when *traveling* or living abroad. More specifically, 10 participants elaborated on the use of Tinder as a tool to get valuable information from locals about the place they are traveling to and the ability to meet other travelers nearby. Six non-heterosexual respondents remarked that Tinder was a valuable application to get in touch with people with a similar sexual orientation or to learn more about their own sexual orientation. Finally, five respondents admitted to use the application to forget about their exes. Consequently, new items were developed for the themes Curiosity (n = 6), Flirting/Social Skills (n = 6), Traveling (n = 5), Sexual Orientation (n = 5), and Ex (n = 5).

Of the 108 reasons, the 58 remaining reasons nicely fitted the previously identified Tinder motive factors. Remarkably, 11 participants talked about *entertainment* motives when describing their Tinder use and 10 participants referred to *pass time* motives. Therefore, five extra items were formulated (2 for Entertainment and 3 for Pass Time), congruent with the given answers, to see whether adding items will lead to two different factors in Study 3 given that in the current study these items loaded onto one single factor ("Pass Time/Entertainment"). Hence, this "Pass Time/Entertainment" theme was split up again. Seven respondents referred to Social Pressure when describing their motives for using Tinder. However, a closer inspection of the Social Pressure items and answers revealed that two different themes emerged. While some mentioned *peer pressure* as a motive (e.g., I use Tinder because my friends wanted me to use the application), others acknowledged using Tinder to be trendy, referring to *belongingness*. Therefore, two additional items were developed to refer to the theme Belongingness (total items = 4) and one extra item was formulated for the theme Peer Pressure (total items = 3). Hence, the thematic analyses of the 108 answers on the open question resulted in the construction of 35 new items.

Tinder Motives Scale: First Version

Based on the results described above, an adapted version of the initial 42-version Tinder Motives item pool was created. Aside from the 35 existing items, 35 new items were developed,

based on answers to the open question. This resulting pool of 70 items, conceptually classified in 13 motives, will be subjected to psychometric analyses in Study 3. The number of items for the different item themes were 5 for Socializing, 6 for Social Approval, 6 for Relationship Seeking, 6 for Sexual Experience, 6 for Curiosity, 6 for Flirting/Social Skills, 5 for Traveling, 5 for Sexual Orientation, 5 for Ex, 6 for Entertainment, 7 for Pass Time, 4 for Belongingness, and 3 for Peer Pressure.

STUDY 3: FINALIZING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TINDER MOTIVES SCALE

Method

Participants and Procedure

A Flemish convenience sample was collected conform Study 2 by using Facebook as a sampling tool. After one week, 485 Tinder users had completed (completion rate = 94.54%) the survey and data collection was ceased (50.1% females, M_{age} = 26.71; SD_{age} = 5.32). This time, respondents could not skip any questions and respondents who did not complete the survey were deleted from the sample. The age range was between 19 and 49 years old. The majority of participants reported to be single (80.6%) and heterosexual (87.4%). Participants did not receive an incentive for their participation and the study was approved by the research ethics board.

Measures

Tinder Motives Scale (TMS), first version. The 70-item version of the TMS that resulted from Study 2 is used in the current study and subjected to psychometric analyses, by doing alternating EFA's and reliability analyses until a satisfying structure with reliable factors was reached, keeping the idea of parsimony in mind. Finally, this factor structure was confirmed by a confirmatory factor analysis.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analyses, Reliability Analyses, and Descriptives

The factor structure of the 70-item version of the TMS was investigated using EFA with oblique rotation in SPSS 23. Fifteen eigenvalues with a value greater than 1 were extracted: 11.99, 8.15, 4.86, 3.40, 3.23, 2.79, 2.57, 2.23, 1.93, 1.80, 1.47, 1.36, 1.27, 1.14, 1.04. Together, the factors explained 70.29% of the variance. Conform Study 2, items with loadings smaller than .45 were deleted, as explained below.

The 15-factor structure did not perfectly reproduce the intended structure. Eight factors were completely congruent with the intended structure (Social Approval, Relationship Seeking,

Sexual Experience, Flirting/Social Skills, Traveling, Ex, Belongingness, and Peer Pressure; F1-F8 respectively), but Socializing (F9) and Sexual Orientation (F10) both had one item with loadings smaller than .45 (hence, these two items were deleted). Correspondingly, only four of the five intended items were retained for both Socializing and Sexual Orientation.

Conform Study 2, several items (seven in this study) loaded together on the factor "Pass Time/Entertainment" (F11), indicating that adding items did not result in two separate factors as initially intended (together including 13 items). Of the remaining six items (i.e., 13-7 = 6), the four items that were initially intended for the factor Pass Time now loaded on a different factor, which we named "Distraction" (F12). Another item of these six remaining items loaded on the fifteenth factor, but given that factors require more than one item with decent factor loadings, this item (and thus, the 15th factor) was deleted. Further, the final item of these six remaining items was initially added to contribute to Entertainment, but did not have a salient factor loading and was therefore also deleted. Finally, two different factors emerged for the items initially belonging to the factor Curiosity. Three items had salient factor loadings on a factor we renamed "Application Curiosity" (F13) and the three remaining items had salient factor loadings on a factor we renamed "Match Curiosity" (F14). Given that in total four items were deleted, the remaining item pool included 66 items.

Next, the internal consistency of the remaining provisional 14 motive item sets (F1-F14 with 66 items) was analyzed. Five items that lowered the internal consistency of an item set were deleted from the item pool: one item that belonged to the factors Relationship Seeking, Sexual Orientation, and Distraction respectively, and two items that belonged to the factor Ex.

The remaining 61-item version of the TMS was again subjected to an EFA with oblique rotation. Thirteen eigenvalues with a value greater than 1 were extracted: 11.06, 6.97, 4.76, 3.25, 2.67, 2.64, 2.42, 2.12, 1.82, 1.56, 1.42, 1.30, 1.23; together, explaining 70.84% of the variance. Items that previously loaded on two different factors (Application Curiosity and Match Curiosity) now loaded on one factor, which we renamed Curiosity (as initially intended). However, a closer inspection of the factor loadings revealed that items previously belonging to Match Curiosity (range factor loadings: .47-.48) had substantial cross loadings (range factor loadings: .33-.42) on Social Approval. To avoid such cross-loadings and to obtain a pure factor structure, these three items were deleted, resulting in 58 items.

Subsequently, an EFA (oblique rotation) was conducted on the final 58-item TMS version (see **Table 6**). Again, 13 eigenvalues with a value greater than 1 were extracted: 10.38, 6.92, 4.67, 3.23, 2.66, 2.59, 2.39, 1.95, 1.73, 1.54, 1.41, 1.30, 1.13, explaining 72.26% of the variance. All items had salient factor loadings and no substantial cross-loadings.

Reliability analyses on the resulting 13 motive factors revealed that none of them had items that lowered the internal consistency, with the exception of one item belonging to the factor Peer Pressure. Yet, as Peer Pressure seemed to be an important Tinder motive, but only had three items, the item that lowered the internal consistency was not deleted in order to keep at least three items per factor, as it is recommended that "absolutely no fewer than three items per factor be adhered to throughout" (Raubenheimer, 2004, p. 60).

Thus, the final Tinder Motives Scale (TMS) includes 58 items that are organized in 13 reliable factors (see **Table 6**). More specifically, the reliability results of Study 3 show that the Cronbach's alphas of the 13 TMS factors ranged between .70 and .95, what can be considered as good to excellent reliabilities (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The final TMS is listed in **Table 7**.

Furthermore, **Table 6** also reports the descriptive statistics. To evaluate whether the mean scores for the thirteen Tinder motives were significantly different within each respondent, a repeated measures ANOVA was performed. The overall differences between means across the thirteen Tinder motives were statistically significant: $F(8.93, 4321.09) = 191.84$, $p < .001$; the corresponding effect size was a partial η^2 of .28. All possible pairwise comparisons were made using the Bonferroni correction to compare mean scores across the thirteen Tinder motives. The motives Pass Time/Entertainment ($M = 5.09$; $SD = 1.14$) and Curiosity ($M = 4.96$; $SD = 1.26$) appeared to be the strongest motives in Study 3. While these two means did not significantly differ from each other within each respondent (mean difference = .13, $p = 1.00$), they were significantly different from the eleven remaining Tinder motives within each respondent (Pass Time/Entertainment: range Cohen's $d = .58 – 2.22$; Curiosity: range Cohen's $d = .47 – 2.00$). The Tinder motives Belongingness ($M = 2.58$; $SD = 1.12$) and Ex ($M = 2.68$; $SD = 1.58$), on the other hand, had the lowest mean scores. The mean scores for Belongingness differed significantly from all other mean scores (range Cohen's $d = .21 – 2.22$) except for Ex (mean difference: .10, $p = 1.00$) and Peer Pressure (mean difference: .18, $p = .06$) within each respondent. The mean score for the Tinder motive Ex did significantly differ from all other mean scores (range Cohen's $d = .68 – 1.58$), except for the following: Belongingness (as already mentioned), Peer Pressure (mean difference: .08, $p = 1.00$), Traveling (mean difference: .20, $p = 1.00$,) and Sexual Experience (mean difference: .33, $p = .11$) within each respondent.

Table 6. *Tinder Motives Scale (TMS; 58 items) in Study 3: Factors, N items, factor loadings, reliabilities, and descriptives.*

TMS Factor	*N* Items	Range Loadings	*a*	*M*	*SD*
Social Approval	6	.71-.85*	.91	4.13	1.40
Relationship Seeking	5	.69-.90	.93	4.18	1.51
Sexual Experience	6	.73-.92*	.91	3.01	1.54
Flirting/Social Skills	6	.50-.75*	.86	3.84	1.35
Traveling	5	.81-.95	.95	2.88	1.69
Ex	3	.93-.96	.95	2.68	1.58
Belongingness	4	.57-.78	.74	2.58	1.12
Peer Pressure	3	.60-.86	.70	2.76	1.32
Socializing	4	.64-.82*	.85	4.35	1.40
Sexual Orientation	3	.86-.94*	.91	3.98	1.87
Pass Time/Entertainment	7	.55-.86	.90	5.09	1.14
Distraction	3	.75-.85*	.80	3.83	1.56
Curiosity	3	.70-.82*	.77	4.96	1.26

Note. * Items belonging to this factor have negative factor loadings

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Consequently, the 13-factor structure was tested by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Mplus Version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015). The robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimator was used (Yuan & Bentler, 2000). Model fit was evaluated by means of several fit indices, more exactly the relative or normed chi-square (chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio; $\chi 2/df$) with values ≤ 5 indicating an acceptable fit, ≤ 3 indicating a good fit and ≤ 2 a very good fit (Kline, 2005), the Root Mean Square of Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with values of $\leq .10$ indicating an acceptable fit, values of $\leq .08$ suggesting an approximate model fit, and values of $\leq .05$ pointing to a good model fit (Chen, Curran, Bollen, Kirby, & Paxton, 2008), the Standardized Root Mean square Residual (SRMR) with values of $\leq .08$ suggesting a good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) as well as the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) with values of $\geq .90$ indicating a good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The analyses indicated that the model had a good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 1.83$, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .05, CFI = .92, and TLI = .92) including high standardized factor loadings (all significant; $p < .001$) and low standard errors.

Table 7. *Final Items, 7-Point Likert Scale (1) Strongly Disagree, (7) Strongly Agree, "I use Tinder…".*

TMS Factor	Items (N = 58)
Social Approval	To get an "ego-boost". To get self-validation from others. To see how desirable I am. To get compliments. To be able to better estimate my own attractiveness. To get attention.
Relationship Seeking	To find someone for a serious relationship. To fall in love. To meet a future husband or wife. To build an emotional connection with someone. To seek out someone to date.
Sexual Experience	To find a friend-with-benefits/fuckbuddy. To find a one-night-stand. To see how easy it is to find a sexual partner. To increase my sexual experience. To live out a sexual fantasy. To find a lover/mistress.
Flirting/Social Skills	To learn to flirt. To improve my social skills. To increase my flirting experience. To gain more self-confidence in my social skills. Because it is hard to talk to people in real life. Because it is a more enjoyable to make the first move.
Traveling	To get tips from locals (in restaurants, shopping, party,…) when traveling. To meet other travelers/locals when in a foreign country. To learn about hotspots in foreign countries through locals. To easily find people that are willing to party when in a foreign country. To broaden my social network when on an abroad/exchange experience.
Ex	To get over my ex. To think less about my ex. So that I do not focus my attention on my ex anymore.
Belongingness	Because I want to be trendy. To be cool. Because it is a fad. Because everyone uses Tinder.
Peer Pressure	Because my friends thought I should use Tinder. As suggested by friends. Because someone else made me a Tinder profile.

TMS Factor	Items (N = 58)
Socializing	To make new friends. To broaden my social network. To meet new people. To talk to people I don't know personally.
Sexual Orientation	To connect with other people with the same sexual orientation. To get to know people with the same sexual orientation. To meet singles with a similar sexual orientation.
Pass Time/Entertainment	To pass time. Because it passes time when I'm bored. To occupy my time. When I have nothing better to do. For fun. Because it is entertaining. To relax.
Distraction	As a break at work or during a study period. To procrastinate things I should be doing (working, studying,…). To combat boredom when working or studying.
Curiosity	To see what the application is about. Out of curiosity. To try it out.

STUDY 4: ASSESSING THE TINDER MOTIVES SCALE'S PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES

Method

Participants and Procedure

In total, 1425 Flemish Tinder users participated in the online survey study. The completion rate was approximately 79.58%, with 1134 respondents remaining in the dataset. Again, we only included respondents that filled in every question of the survey. Data cleaning was done based on an instructed response item in the questionnaire (Meade & Craig, 2012). False answers were provided by 103 participants, hence 1031 (59.9% females, M_{age} = 26.93; SD_{age} = 7.93; $Range_{age}$ = 18-69) respondents remained in the dataset, of which 720 were current Tinder users and 311 used Tinder in the past. Slightly more than half of the sample (52.6%) consisted of non-students and 86 participants were non-heterosexual. Around two-thirds of the sample (n = 691) have had a face-to-face interaction with someone they met on Tinder.

To obtain an independent sample (vs. the TMS construction sample in Study 3), including a wide range of participants across Belgium, we relied on various media channels. More specifically, several local and national newspapers spread the link to the survey, both online (social media) and

offline (newspaper). The study was approved by the research ethics board. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was assured.

Measures

Tinder Motives Scale (TMS). The final 58-item version of the TMS (including 13 motive factors) that resulted from Study 3 is used in the current study and subjected to psychometric analyses.

Tinder use and outcomes. Participants were asked how often they use Tinder. Answer categories were: (1) *almost never,* (2) *once a month*, (3) *multiple times per month*, (4) *once a week*, (5) *multiple times per week*, (6) *every day*, and (7) *multiple times a day*. On average, participants used Tinder in between one to multiple times a week (M = 4.84; SD = 1.61). In addition, participants indicated: (1) the number of Tinder users they met face-to-face (M = 4.25; SD = 4.79; n = 689); and how many of those people they: (2) had a romantic relationship with (M = 0.86; SD = 4.42; n = 642), (3) kissed with (M = 2.56; SD = 4.77; n = 678), (4) had a sexual interaction with (M = 1.57; SD = 4.41, n = 647), (5) had a casual sexual relationship with (M = 0.81; SD = 1.94; n = 646), and (6) became friends with (M = 2.19; SD = 4.18; n = 662). All Tinder outcome variables had standard deviations larger than the mean, which indicates non-normality distributions. Consequently, a non-parametric test (Kendall's Tau; τ) was used to measure the strength of the associations between Tinder motives and outcomes (Newson, 2002).

Fear of Being Single Scale. Participants completed the six-item Fear of Being Single Scale (Spielmann et al., 2013). Answer categories ranged from (1) *totally disagree* to (5) *totally agree*. These items were aggregated to form an index called "fear of being single" (α = .88, M = 3.06; SD = 1.03).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

The factor structure of the final 58-item version of the TMS was investigated using EFA (oblique rotation) in SPSS 23. Thirteen eigenvalues with a value greater than 1 were extracted: 11.31, 7.72, 4.63, 3.41, 2.87, 2.51, 2.29, 1.73, 1.54, 1.38; 1.34, 1.24, 1.07. Together, the factors explained 72.87% of the variance. The EFA perfectly reproduced the intended 13-factor structure and all items had salient factor loadings (> .45) and no substantial cross-loadings (see **Table 8**). Next, the internal consistency of the 13 motive factors was analyzed. All Cronbach's alphas were between .74 and .95, indicating good to excellent reliabilities (see **Table 8**).

Table 8. *Tinder Motives Scale (TMS; 58 items) in Study 4: Factors, N items, factor loadings, reliabilities, and descriptives.*

TMS Factor	*N* Items	Range Loadings	*a*	*M*	*SD*
Social Approval	6	.71-.87	.92	4.00	1.46
Relationship Seeking	5	.73-.90	.93	4.01	1.60
Sexual Experience	6	.74-.90*	.92	2.59	1.45
Flirting/Social Skills	6	.45-.81*	.88	3.62	1.45
Traveling	5	.85-.94	.95	2.70	1.68
Ex	3	.95-.95	.95	2.47	1.74
Belongingness	4	.73-.83	.85	2.41	1.21
Peer Pressure	3	.62-.89	.74	2.76	1.43
Socializing	4	.72-.89	.86	4.21	1.41
Sexual Orientation	3	.62-.89	.90	3.41	1.84
Pass Time/Entertainment	7	.50-.86	.91	5.02	1.23
Distraction	3	.80-.84	.82	3.76	1.63
Curiosity	3	.68-.83	.76	4.49	1.36

Note. * Items belonging to this factor have negative factor loadings

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

As in Study 3, the 13-factor structure was tested with a CFA. Again, the analyses indicated that the model had a good fit to the data (χ^2/df = 2.84, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .06, CFI = .93, and TLI = .92) including high standardized factor loadings (all significant; $p < .001$) and low standard errors.

Descriptives and Correlation Analyses

Descriptive statistics were reported to explore the Tinder motives (see **Table 8**) and both Pearson and Kendall Tau correlation analyses were conducted (see **Table 9**) to investigate the construct validity of the TMS (relying on associations of the Tinder motives with both Tinder use and outcomes, as well as the Fear of Being Single Scale).

Conform Study 3, Pass Time/Entertainment (M = 5.02; SD = 1.23) and Curiosity (M = 4.49; SD = 1.36;) were the strongest motives for using Tinder. To evaluate whether the means for the thirteen Tinder motives were significantly different within each respondent, a repeated measures ANOVA was performed. The overall differences between means across the thirteen Tinder motives were statistically significant: $F(8.59, 8850.89) = 394.31$, $p < .001$; the corresponding effect size was a partial η^2 of .28. All possible pairwise comparisons were made using the Bonferroni correction to compare mean scores across the thirteen Tinder motives and confirmed that the mean scores for both Pass Time/Entertainment (range Cohen's d = .41 – 2.14) and Curiosity (range Cohen's d = .21 – 1.62) were significantly different from all other twelve Tinder

motives within each respondent. Such motives imply a rather passive use of Tinder. Indeed, the correlation analysis suggests that those who use Tinder out of curiosity are less likely to make friends on the app (τ = -.09, p < .01), underscoring the construct validity. No significant relationships were found between Pass Time/Entertainment and face-to-face meetings with someone they met on Tinder (τ = -.01; p = .82) or making friends on Tinder (τ = .03; p = .34).

As was the case in Study 3, Belongingness (M = 2.41; SD = 1.21) and Ex (M = 2.47; SD = 1.74) had the lowest mean scores. The mean for Belongingness significantly differed from all Tinder motives (range Cohen's d = .20 – 2.14) except for Ex (mean difference: .06, p = 1.00) and Sexual Experience (mean difference: .18, p = .06) within each respondent. The mean for Ex did significantly differ from most Tinder motives (range Cohen's d = .18 – 1.69), with the exception of Belongingness, Sexual Experience (mean difference: .12, p = 1.00) and Traveling (mean difference: .23, p = .11) within each respondent.[9]

Increased Tinder use is significantly associated with Relationship Seeking (r = .27; p < .01), Socializing (r = .25; p < .01), Flirting/Social Skills (r = .19; p < .01), Social Approval (r = .13; p < .01), Ex (r = .11; p < .01), and Sexual Orientation (r = .11; p < .01). Those who use Tinder because it is trendy (i.e., Belongingness; r = -.10; p < .01) and out of Curiosity (r = -.07; p < .05) seem to be using the application less often, all pointing to construct validity. While those who are looking to increase their Sexual Experience do not significantly more use the application, they are more likely to meet up with someone they matched with on Tinder (τ = .17; p < .01) and more likely to kiss (τ = .19; p < .01), have a sexual interaction (τ = .26; p < .01), have a casual sexual relationship (τ = .27; p < .01) or make friends (τ = .11; p < .01) with someone they met through Tinder. In contrast, those with Relationship Seeking purposes are more likely to have a relationship with someone they met on Tinder (τ = .10; p < .01; i.e., the outcome Relationship shows only a positive significant correlation with Relationship Seeking) and less likely to start a casual sexual relationship (τ = -.09; p < .01) with someone they met on Tinder, clearly underscoring the construct validity. Those who are using Tinder while traveling (τ = .16, p < .01) and for socializing purposes (τ = .21; p < .05) are more likely to have made friends on the application, whereas those with Traveling purposes have less relationships as outcome (τ = -.11, p < .01), all indicating the construct validity.

Finally, Fear of Being Single is positively associated with Tinder motives Relationship Seeking (r = .34; p < .01), Flirting/Social Skills (r = .27; p < .01), Ex (r = .21; p < .01), and Socializing (r = .18; p < .01), indicating that people with a stronger fear of being single are more

[9] We did not include all output from the repeated measures ANOVA's in Study 3 and Study 4 to maintain comprehensibility of the reported tables.

likely to use Tinder for the aforementioned motives, with on top, Relationship Seeking motives, pointing towards the construct validity of the TMS. In addition, Tinder users with a stronger fear of being single are less likely to use Tinder to increase Sexual Experience ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$). Taken together, all these findings underscore the TMS's construct validity.

Table 9. *Correlation analysis in Study 4: TMS factors, Tinder use, Tinder outcomes, and fear of being single.*

TMS Factor	Tinder Use	Tinder Meet Ups	Tinder Relationship	Tinder Kiss	Tinder Sex	Tinder Sexual Relationship	Tinder Friends	Fear of Being Single
Social Approval	.13**	-.01	.01	.03	.02	.07*	-.01	.14**
Relationship Seeking	.27**	.09**	.10**	.03	-.04	-.09**	-.05	.34**
Sexual Experience	.05	.17**	-.10**	.19**	.26**	.27**	.11**	-.18**
Flirting/Social Skills	.19**	.06*	-.05	.03	.01	.04	.04	.27**
Traveling	.06	.20**	-.11**	.16**	.18**	.15**	.16**	-.03
Ex	.11**	.05	.06	.07*	.07*	.09**	.01	.21**
Belongingness	-.10**	.00	-.06	-.02	-.02	.02	.01	.06
Peer Pressure	-.06	-.03	.00	-.06	-.10*	-.00	.01	.09*
Socializing	.25**	.12*	.01	.07*	.03	.08*	.21*	.18**
Sexual Orientation	.11**	.08*	-.07*	.07*	.08*	.07*	.04	.08
Pass Time/Entertainment	.00	-.01	-.04	.01	.00	.05	.03	.00
Distraction	.08**	.03	-.01	.04	.04	.09*	.03	.08**
Curiosity	-.07*	-.01	.01	.03	.02	.07*	-.01	-.07*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; Pearson correlation for Fear of Being Single and Tinder Use, Kendall's Tau for all other variables

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter was to examine motives for using Tinder and to develop a corresponding assessment instrument capable of reliably and validly measuring these Tinder motives. Understanding why millions of people worldwide use Tinder, initially designed as a dating application, is important for several reasons. Foremost, it allows for explaining and understanding the growing popularity of mobile dating applications while it additionally fosters further inquiry into motivational processes regarding mediated human interaction. Moreover, understanding motives for Tinder use provides a necessary starting point for related research questions such as those concerning positive or negative effects of using such mobile dating applications.

We set out from a U&G framework and relied on four studies to investigate the motives for using Tinder. In building the TMS, we aimed to adhere to rigorous scientific standards found in the literature on scale construction (Comrey & Lee, 1992; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978; Raubenheimer, 2004). This involved several steps: an apparent conceptualization of the constructs, building and refining an item pool (Study 1 and 2), and testing the structure, reliability and construct validity of these items and constructs (Study 2, 3 and 4). Based on these four independent studies, the final 58-item TMS was developed to reliably and validly assess 13 different motives for using Tinder. In both Study 3 and Study 4, Pass Time/Entertainment and Curiosity were the strongest Tinder motives. Such findings suggest that people are not mainly – or certainly not exclusively – looking for relational or sexual intimacy on Tinder, implying that Tinder rather functions as a "location-based screening/meeting application" than a "mobile dating application." In fact, our results indicate that people are using Tinder for far more reasons than the developers of the application could ever imagine, including using Tinder to obtain Social Approval (e.g., to get an "ego-boost"), referring to the relatively passive use of Tinder (i.e., screening), or get in touch with locals when Traveling, referring to the active use of Tinder (i.e., meeting). However, it is important to note that our results might be country specific and future research is warranted to examine whether these findings can be generalized to other countries as well. For other research purposes, it might also be valuable to distinguish between users that often use Tinder and users that do not have a lot of experience with the application, as the latter category is probably more likely to use Tinder out of curiosity.

As U&G researchers argue that outcomes are important for users to continue engagement with a specific medium (e.g., LaRose & Eastin, 2004), we looked at associations between Tinder motives and outcomes. Those who have motives related to relationship formation, which can be either romantic, sexual, friendly or while traveling, are significantly more likely to meet up with other Tinder users. In addition, even though Sexual Experience was not a very common motive

for using Tinder in both Study 3 and 4, the motive is positively associated with kissing, having sexual intercourse and having casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users. While the popular media have been critical about Tinder by repeatedly portraying it as a "hookup app" (e.g., Sales, 2015), such findings suggest that *motives* behind the use of such application, rather than merely *the use* of such an application, are responsible for sexual outcomes, thereby stressing the importance of studying Tinder motives within the U&G framework.

Although this chapter serves as a base for future studies on Tinder motives, a number of limitations need to be considered when interpreting the current results. First, although several empirical studies have been performed to assess the structure, reliability, and validity of the TMS, instrument validation entails an ongoing process in which the validity of a scale is tested by each new study making use of the instrument. Our intent in conveying the current results at this juncture is to allow the broader field to explore the validity of the TMS constructs, in the hopes that an empirical literature will coalesce.

Furthermore, the assessment instrument might be culture and application specific. Cross-cultural validation is necessary when wanting to use the TMS in different cultural settings. In addition, the rapid growth and popularity of mobile dating applications results in the adaption of such applications in several different countries, cultures, and even religions. To illustrate with an example: MoMo is a popular mobile (dating) app in China, whereas Minder is often used by Muslims to meet other Muslims within their vicinity. Consequently, future studies could demonstrate whether adapted versions of the TMS (i.e., replacing "Tinder" wordings in the TMS by the mobile application that needs to be examined, e.g., "I use MoMo…") captures motives for using such people-nearby applications and remains a psychometrically sound assessment instrument.

Finally, as we mainly relied on Facebook as a sampling tool to reach a broad range of potential participants, our sampling procedure implied self-selection bias. In other words, participation is restricted to individuals that were willing to participate. As a result, it might be possible that not all motives for using Tinder are captured by this research project, despite sampling efforts that resulted in a large number of 3,262 participants. Nonetheless, this research will serve as a base for future studies by providing a reliably and validly measurement instrument which extends our knowledge of Tinder motives.

CONCLUSION

Since its existence, critics repeatedly pointed out Tinder's promotion of casual sex and express their concern about the consequences for long-term relationships (e.g., Sales, 2015).

However, in line with the U&G framework, our results indicate that such outcomes might depend on the individuals' motives for using Tinder. While associations with sexual intercourse and casual sexual relationships were found for those using Tinder to increase Sexual Experience, this was not the case for Tinder users who were, for example, looking for a romantic relationship or to obtain social approval. Summarized, this chapter serves as the first to gain a better understanding of motives for using Tinder and stresses the importance of taking into account such motives when wanting to study Tinder behaviors or outcomes.

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CHAPTER 4. THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND TINDER USE AND MOTIVES[10]

ABSTRACT

From a personality theory perspective, it is important to find out what motivates people to use Tinder and what makes them different from those who never used the application. The present study investigated how the Five-Factor Model of personality relates to both Tinder use and motives. A cross-sectional online survey was conducted on 502 single emerging adults. Single Tinder users are more extraverted and open to new experiences than single non-users, whereas single non-users tend to be more conscientious than single Tinder users. Additionally, the findings provide several unique insights into how individual differences in singles can account for Tinder motives by supporting nearly all hypotheses. Regarding the sexual Tinder motive, only agreeableness was negatively associated with using Tinder for casual sex.

INTRODUCTION

The Big Five personality traits have often been studied in relation to the use of both online dating sites (e.g., Clemens, Atkin, & Krishnan, 2015) and social networking sites (e.g., Correa, Hinsley, & de Zúñiga, 2010). Being a relatively new phenomenon, not much is known about the Big Five personality traits that influence the use of mobile dating applications that offer immediacy and proximity through their location-based services. Tinder is such an app that is predominantly targeted at heterosexual singles. Consequently, the first goal of this chapter is to examine personality differences between single Tinder users and singles that never used the application.

Personality traits might not only trigger the use of mobile dating applications, but also influence motives of use. Studies that explored motives for using mobile dating applications discovered a wide range of motives. These were not restricted to social components (i.e., seeking a relationship, casual sex, or friendships) but also included non-social motives such as entertainment seeking or ego-boosting (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014; Chapter 3). The diversity in motives for using mobile dating apps such as Tinder implies that

[10] Based on Timmermans, E., & De Caluwé, E. (2017). To Tinder or not to Tinder, that's the question: An individual differences perspective to Tinder use and motives. *Personality and Individual Differences, 110*, 74-79. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2017.01.026

several factors might influence these reasons. Therefore, the second goal of this chapter is to unravel associations between personality characteristics and Tinder motives.

THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND TINDER USE

Since its existence, scholars have examined differences in personality characteristics between singles that are active on online dating sites and those who are not, only to discover that not many differences exist (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). A German study that compared online daters with people who never used those services before, only found that internet daters scored significantly lower on extraversion (Aretz, Demuth, Schmidt, & Vierlein, 2010). Tinder users seem not to differ from internet daters, as no differences were found in terms of self-esteem, sociability, and sexual permissiveness (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). However, compared to non-users, users of mobile dating apps appear more sociable, impulsive, and interested in sex (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016). Although these studies are helpful in gaining a better understanding of the association between personality traits and use, they are not without limitations. First, analyses were run on a fairly small number of dating app users ($N = 57$, Carpenter & McEwan; $N = 30$, Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). Second, none of these studies explored the associations between mobile dating app use and the Five-Factor Model.

Given the novel nature of mobile dating applications, we argue that individuals with higher scores on openness to experience might be more likely to use Tinder. Furthermore, when it comes to new media, previous studies repeatedly found extraversion to be the strongest predictor for usage (e.g., Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010). Additionally, Tinder stresses the importance of personal safety and matching with real people by linking the Tinder profile to a user's Facebook account (Duguay, 2017), thereby reducing anonymity among its users. In combination with the application's focus on physical attractiveness and location-based matching, Tinder might be attracting extraverts rather than introverts (Correa et al., 2010; McKenna & Bargh, 2000).

THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND TINDER MOTIVES

Not only popular media, but also researchers attribute the rise of Tinder and similar applications to their promotion of casual sex (e.g., Mason, 2016). Yet, a recent study on Tinder motives found that casual sex is among the least common motives to use Tinder (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Chapter 3). In fact, users report using mobile dating applications more for entertainment purposes than they did for finding a romantic or sexual partner (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Chapter 3). Such findings thus raise the

question which factors are associated with these different motives. This chapter addresses this void by exploring associations between the Big Five personality traits and the 13 Tinder motives (see **Table 9** for the 13 Tinder motives). Our hypotheses will be formulated for each personality trait separately, being agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience, respectively.

Research on online dating showed that individuals with higher scores on agreeableness are more likely to use online dating sites out of peer pressure (Clemens et al., 2015) and less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, such as having multiple partners (Hoyle, Fejfar, & Miller, 2000), compared to people scoring lower on agreeableness. Accordingly, agreeableness is expected to be positively related to the Tinder motive Peer Pressure, but negatively related to Sexual Experience.

Congruent with previous findings on personality and online dating, conscientiousness is expected to be positively associated with the relationship motive (Clemens et al., 2015). While finding a long-term partner is often perceived as a time-consuming and frustrating activity (Finkel et al., 2012), Tinder facilitates the quest for romance by showing potential partners within the proximity. Contrarily, we hypothesize a negative association between conscientiousness and the Tinder motives Pass Time/Entertainment and Distraction. Conscientious people see time as a limited resource that should not be wasted (Christopher, Zabel, & Jones, 2008) and are often portrayed as being goal oriented and efficient in achieving those goals (Roberts et al., 2014). Using Tinder as an entertainment tool or as a means of distracting the attention (i.e., using Tinder when bored in class or at work) contrasts with such values.

While extraverts rather use SNS for its social features than its social outcomes (Amiel & Sargent, 2004; Ross et al., 2009), introverts often seek out online platforms to communicate with others as they experience less anxiety when communicating online (Rice & Markey, 2009). Consequently, we hypothesize that the personality trait extraversion will be negatively associated with social motives such as Relationship Seeking, Socializing, and Flirting/Social Skills. Contrarily, extraverts tend to seek out sexual stimulation more often than introverts (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Jonason, Hatfield, & Boler, 2015) suggesting that extraversion will be positively associated with using Tinder to have casual sex.

Individuals scoring high on neuroticism experience a stronger need for approval (Dunkley, Sanislow, Grilo, & McGlashan, 2004) and more distress following a break-up (Tashiro & Frazier, 2003). Additionally, neuroticism is positively correlated with sexual curiosity and having sex with multiple partners (Hoyle et al., 2000). Therefore, we hypothesize positive associations between neuroticism and Social Approval, Ex, and Sexual Experience. The Tinder motive "Ex" refers to using Tinder to get over the ex-partner.

Finally, individuals scoring high on openness to experience are more likely to use online dating sites to meet new people, rather than looking for a relationship or casual sex (Clemens et al., 2015). Therefore, we expect that openness to experience will be positively associated with Socializing and Traveling. Moreover, given that high scores on openness to experience are reflected in curiosity and novelty-seeking (John & Srivastava, 1999), we hypothesize a negative association with using Tinder because everyone does (i.e., Belongingness), but a positive association with using Tinder out of Curiosity.

METHOD

Procedure and Participants

To reach a diverse sample of Flemish respondents, we relied on several local and national newspapers to spread the link to the online survey both offline (newspaper) and online (website and social media). Participation was voluntarily and participants did not receive any incentive for their participation. The study was approved by the research ethics board. The virtual sampling method resulted in a total of 1,573 adults that participated in the study. The completion rate was approximately 81.50%, with 1,282 respondents remaining in the dataset. Respondents were allowed to skip questions and those that did not complete more than half of the survey were deleted from the sample. In order to compare single Tinder users with single non-users without any Tinder experience within the same age range, respondents that were currently in a relationship (n = 484, 15.9% is a Tinder user), used Tinder in the past (n = 65), and middle-aged (ages 30-45, n = 149) and older adults (ages 46 and older, n = 47) were excluded from the dataset. We decided to only include emerging adults as they are most likely to use mobile dating apps (Smith & Anderson, 2016). A final data cleaning was done based on four instructed-response items (Meade & Craig, 2012) and all respondents with more than one incorrect answer were deleted to increase reliability (n = 35). In total, 502 respondents remained in the dataset (58.5% females, M_{age} = 23.11; SD_{age} = 2.83, Age_{range} = 18-29 years old) of which 378 singles were currently using Tinder and 124 singles never used Tinder. More than two-thirds of the sample (70.3%) consisted of students and 44 participants were non-heterosexual.

Measures

Demographical information. Respondents indicated their age, sex (0 = male; 1 = female), sexual orientation (0 = non-heterosexual; 1 = heterosexual), and whether they were currently a student (= 1) or not (= 0).

Tinder use and motives. Participants were asked whether they use Tinder (0 = never; 1 = currently). To assess motives for using Tinder, the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Chapter 3) was adopted. Factor analytic results of the current study are reported in the preliminary analyses section, also including a descriptive statistics table with all reliabilities, ranging from good (α = .72; Curiosity) to excellent (α = .95; Traveling, Ex) (see **Table 10**).

NEO-PI-3 first half. The 120-item NEO-PI-3FH (McCrae & Costa, 2007; Williams & Simms, 2016) was used to measure the Big Five personality traits (cf., the Five-Factor Model of personality, Costa & McCrae, 1992), which only consists of the first 120 items (rated on a 5-point Likert scale) of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) but has strong relations to the full-length scale and preserves the overall-structure of the measure (Williams & Simms, 2016). In the current study, the five traits had good reliabilities, ranging from .78 (openness to experience) to .85 (conscientiousness/neuroticism) (see **Table 10**).

Table 10. *Descriptive statistics of study variables.*

	M	*SD*	Number of items	α
Tinder Motives				
Social Approval	4.19	1.31	6	.90
Pass Time/ Entertainment	5.27	1.07	7	.90
Traveling	3.01	1.70	5	.95
Sexual Experience	2.75	1.42	6	.92
Ex	2.61	1.79	3	.95
Belongingness	2.42	1.21	4	.86
Relationship Seeking	4.05	1.43	5	.91
Flirting/Social Skills	3.94	1.43	6	.88
Sexual Orientation	3.66	1.81	3	.91
Socializing	4.37	1.25	4	.82
Peer Pressure	2.86	1.49	3	.79
Distraction	4.14	1.51	3	.79
Curiosity	4.54	1.24	3	.72
Personality				
Agreeableness	3.34	.39	24	.80
Conscientiousness	3.24	.44	24	.85
Extraversion	3.36	.44	24	.83
Neuroticism	3.08	.45	24	.85
Openness to Experience	3.44	.41	24	.78

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

The 58-item TMS was subjected to EFA with oblique rotation, and again, 13 eigenvalues with a value greater than 1 were extracted: 10.06, 7.46, 5.00, 3.48, 3.10, 2.64, 2.34, 1.78, 1.73, 1.47, 1.39, 1.21, 1.14. Together, these factors explained 73.77% of the variance. The scree plot also showed that 13 factors explain most of the variance because the line starts to straighten after factor 13. Additionally, parallel analyses and the Velicer's (1976) Minimum Average Partial (MAP) test both suggested to retain 13 factors.

Table 10 reports on the descriptive statistics of these 13 Tinder factors and the personality traits. Inspecting the mean scores of the Tinder factors indicates that they are all broadly represented in the data, given their maximal coverage with scores between 1 and 7. Also, the personality traits show a good coverage with scores ranging from 1.58 to 4.63, hence almost reaching the maximal range (1 – 5).

Table 11 shows the intercorrelations between the 13 Tinder motives, indicating that these 13 factors are not independent. Therefore, we used oblique rotation when conducting EFA. In addition, to correct for multiple testing we adjusted the *p*-values (Bonferroni correction) in our correlation and regression analyses.

Table 11. *Correlations between the 13 Tinder Motives (n = 378).*

Tinder Motives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Social Approval	–												
2. Pass Time/Entertainment	.30**	–											
3. Traveling	.06	.16*	–										
4. Sexual Experience	.24**	.16*	.34**	–									
5. Ex	.18**	-.02	.03	.05	–								
6. Belongingness	.24**	.25**	.10	.16*	.22**	–							
7. Relationship Seeking	.08	-.33**	-.01	.04	.13	-.01	–						
8. Flirting/Social Skills	.40**	-.01	.15	.27**	.06	.19**	.43**	–					
9. Sexual Orientation	.12	-.05	.27**	.33**	.05	.11	.36**	.43**	–				
10. Socializing	.15*	.04	.24**	.12	.08	.13	.44**	.48**	.27**	–			
11. Peer Pressure	.15*	.19**	-.01	-.04	.10	.39**	.05	.15*	.06	.09	–		
12. Distraction	.21**	.52**	.18*	.16*	.16*	.26**	-.17*	.06	.05	.10	.18**	–	
13. Curiosity	.19**	.31**	.05	-.01	.06	.34**	-.01	.24**	.09	.16*	.35**	.20**	–

Note. ** $p < .001$; * $p < .05/13 = .00384$ (Bonferroni correction)

The Big Five Personality Traits and Tinder Use

To investigate whether singles with certain personality traits were more likely to be Tinder users or non-users, a t-test was performed (see **Table 12**). Tinder users scored significantly higher on extraversion than non-users. The Cohen's *d* value (.47) implies a medium effect (Cohen, 1988), where the group means differ approximately half a standard deviation from each other. Additionally, Tinder users have significantly higher scores on openness to experience than non-users. Again, Cohen's *d* (.55) indicates a medium effect, in which the group means are more than half a standard deviation apart. Finally, Tinder users score significantly lower on conscientiousness than non-users. The Cohen's *d* (.27) indicates a small effect. No differences were found for agreeableness and neuroticism.

Table 12. *Means, standard deviations, and independent samples t-test results comparing single Tinder users (n = 378) and single non-users (n = 124) on the Five-Factor Model personality traits.*

	Tinder User		Non-User				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df	*d*
Agreeableness	3.35	.40	3.32	.36	-.683	500	.08
Conscientiousness	3.21	.45	3.32	.37	2.527*	250.110	.27
Extraversion	3.41	.45	3.21	.39	-4.626***	242.478	.47
Neuroticism	3.08	.49	3.07	.34	-.437	301.952	.02
Openness to Experience	3.49	.40	3.27	.40	-5.406***	500	.55

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The Big Five Personality Traits and Tinder Motives

To test our proposed hypotheses for the second goal of this chapter, hierarchical regressions were run with sex, age, sexual orientation, being a student or not (block 1), and the Big five personality domains (block 2) as independent variables and the 13 Tinder motives as dependent variables (see **Table 13**). Because several regressions were run, we used an adjusted *p*-value (.0038).

Agreeableness was, as predicted, negatively associated with Sexual Experience. However, agreeableness was not significantly associated with Peer Pressure.

Conscientiousness was, as predicted, positively associated with Relationship Seeking, and negatively with both Pass Time/Entertainment and Distraction.

Furthermore, extraversion was, as predicted, negatively associated with both Relationship Seeking and Flirting/Social Skills. Additionally, the results also showed that extraversion was

positively associated with Pass Time/Entertainment. Although expected, extraversion was not significantly associated with Socializing and Sexual Experience.

As hypothesized, neuroticism was positively associated with Social Approval and Ex. Despite being predicted, this was not the case for Sexual Experience.

Finally, as expected, openness to experience was positively associated with Traveling. In contrast with the hypotheses, no significant associations existed between openness to experience and Socializing, Belongingness or Curiosity.

Table 13. *Regression analyses with Tinder Motives Scale factors as dependent variables and age, sex, sexual orientation, and being a student (Block 1), and the Five-Factor Model personality traits (Block 2) as independent variables.*

	Social App.	Pass Time /Entert.	Travel	Sexual Exp.	Ex	Belong	Relation Seeking	Flirting / Social Skills	Sexual Orient.	Social	Peer Press.	Distract	Curios
	β	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*	*β*
Block 1													
Age	.08	.04	.15	.05	.03	.02	.20	.01	.13	-.02	.03	-.03	-.06
Sex	.12	.02	-.16	-.44**	.05	.03	-.01	-.17*	-.21**	-.08	.15	.01	.15
Sexual Orientation	.01	.02	-.06	-.04	-.03	-.02	-.10	-.13	-.20**	-.11	.02	.07	-.07
Student	.01	.11	.08	.05	.14	.07	-.05	-.06	-.00	-.10	.01	.33**	.00
Block 2													
Agreeableness	-.14	-.07	-.11	-.21**	-.08	-.14	-.04	-.03	-.02	.06	.06	-.09	.00
Conscientiousness	.01	-.20**	.04	-.09	.03	-.09	.21**	.14	.05	.08	-.07	-.23**	-.02
Extraversion	.13	.17**	.02	.04	.11	.06	-.22**	-.30**	-.17	-.11	-.04	.10	-.07
Neuroticism	.30**	-.05	-.00	.07	.29**	-.04	.02	.17	-.03	.04	-.10	.05	-.05
Openness to Experience	-.03	.12	.20**	.06	-.04	-.16	.00	.02	.02	.08	.00	.09	.00
R^2	.12	.12	.10	.29	.10	.06	.16	.20	.13	.05	.03	.23	.03
F for change in R^2	7.35**	8.49**	3.70*	6.82**	5.39**	4.28*	7.23**	13.76**	2.12	1.84	.87	8.93**	.34

Note. ** $p < .001$; * $p < .05/13 = .00384$ (Bonferroni correction); Social App. = Social Approval, Pass Time/Entert. = Pass Time/Entertainment, Travel = Traveling, Sexual Exp. = Sexual Experience, Belong = Belongingness, Relation Seeking = Relationship Seeking, Sexual Orient. = Sexual Orientation, Social = Socializing, Peer Press. = Peer Pressure, Distract = Distraction, Curios = Curiosity; sex (0 = male, 1 = female), sexual orientation (0 = non-heterosexual; 1 = heterosexual), and currently being a student (= 1) or not (= 0) were dummy coded.

DISCUSSION

This chapter advances the literature on mobile dating applications by being the first to investigate associations between the Big Five personality traits and Tinder use and motives. Regarding Tinder use, our findings suggest that single Tinder users are more extraverted and open to new experiences than single non-users, whereas single non-users reported higher scores on conscientiousness than single Tinder users. No significant differences emerged concerning agreeableness and neuroticism. Indeed, extraverts are known for their interests in new media (Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010), whereas conscientious individuals are less likely to use Tinder as its matching process promotes instant gratification-seeking, a goal attributed to those low in conscientiousness (Roberts, Lejuez, Krueger, Richards, & Hill, 2014). The significant difference regarding scores on openness to experience between single users and non-users indicates Tinder still accounts for being a "new experience" in Belgium. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that while at first a decent part of our sample turned out to be non-users, a closer examination revealed that the majority of those non-users was in a committed relationship at the moment of inquiry. The relative paucity of singles that never used the application in our sample thus suggests that mobile dating applications have become part of day-to-day single life in emerging adulthood.

Furthermore, our findings stress the importance of personality traits as drivers of individual differences in Tinder motives. As predicted, those with higher scores on agreeableness are less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, such as using Tinder to find multiple sexual partners. Contrary to our expectations, no significant positive association was found with Peer Pressure. While individuals with higher scores on agreeableness are more likely to use online dating sites out of peer pressure (Clemens et al., 2015), they seem not to be more likely to use the mobile dating app Tinder.

When it comes to conscientiousness, all hypotheses based on the previous literature could be supported. Single users with higher scores on conscientiousness are significantly more likely to use Tinder to find a romantic partner and less likely to use Tinder to pass time or as a tool for distraction.

As hypothesized, Tinder users with higher scores on extraversion are less likely to use Tinder to find a romantic partner and to improve their flirting/social skills. Being an online platform, Tinder creates a safer environment for individuals whom fear being judged and evaluated negatively. Introversion (low extraversion) is a personality trait that positively predicts social phobia (Bienvenu, Hettema, Neale, Prescott, & Kendler, 2007). Therefore, it is likely that

individuals with lower scores on extraversion are more likely to use the application to improve their social skills. Extraversion was also significantly associated with Pass Time/Entertainment. Extraverts are more prone to boredom when they are by themselves (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Consequently, it is not surprising that singles with higher scores on extraversion are more likely to use the application when wanting to pass time or looking for entertainment. Contrarily to the expectations, extraversion was not significantly associated with Socializing. In fact, none of the personality traits significantly predicted Socializing, which may imply that people are generally using the application to meet new people and to broaden their social network, regardless of their scores on the Big Five personality traits. In a similar vein, the hypothesized positive association between extraversion and using Tinder to increase sexual experience was not supported.

Similarly, no significant association was found between neuroticism and the Sexual Experience motive. A review of the research on personality and casual sex showed that associations with agreeableness are repeatedly found whereas this is not the case for neuroticism and extraversion (Hoyle, Fejfar, & Miller, 2000). This is exactly in line with our findings and could in part explain the non-findings of this chapter. Remarkably, the Tinder user's sex played a strong role in predicting Sexual Experience. Male Tinder users are significantly more likely to use Tinder to have casual sex than female Tinder users. Nonetheless, single Tinder users with higher scores on neuroticism are more likely to use Tinder for social approval and to get over their exes, thereby reflecting the overly anxious and emotional aspects of the neurotic person (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1994).

As anticipated, openness to experience was positively associated with Traveling. Contrarily to expectations, no significant associations with openness to experience emerged for Socializing (as already indicated), Belongingness and Curiosity. The Tinder motive Belongingness had the lowest mean score, which suggests that this motive was endorsed the lowest by participants in the sample. Curiosity, on the other hand, is for these participants the second most common motive to use Tinder. Notably, ideas (described as 'intellectual curiosity' in the manual) is a lower order personality facet of the personality domain openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Consequently, we argue that Tinder has the power to elicit curiosity among its population of interest, regardless of its users' personality traits, as it is a fairly new medium often discussed in popular media (Duguay, 2017) that easily found its way to day-to-day single life among emerging adults.

Limitations of the current chapter are the cross-sectional nature of the data and the sampling method. Consequently, causal interpretations cannot be made and the sampling method might increase participant self-selection. Nevertheless, self-report survey-based measures can

generally be administered through the Internet with good results (Weigold, Weigold, & Russell, 2013). Despite the limitations, this research contributes to the body of research on mobile dating applications, as no studies have yet investigated associations between the Five-Factor model of personality and Tinder use and motives.

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CHAPTER 5. FROM SWIPING TO CASUAL SEX AND/OR COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF TINDER USERS[11]

ABSTRACT

The general public commonly believes that mobile dating applications promote casual sex. While it is argued that the affordances of Tinder facilitate casual sexual interactions, empirical studies show that users also find romantic partners on the app. In the current study, 1,038 Tinder users reported on their sexual and relational outcomes when using Tinder. The odds of having a casual sexual encounter or relationship with another Tinder user are slightly higher than finding a romantic partner on the app. Despite the exploratory nature of this chapter, it serves as a base for future studies on heterosexuals' use of mobile dating applications.

INTRODUCTION

While courtship in the 19th century was characterized by family supervision in the privacy of the home, it became more individualistic during the next century(Illouz, 1997). Recently, it evolved into a more casual practice characterized by high levels of sexual interaction (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Reid, Elliot, & Webber, 2011; Wade, 2017). These developments historically coincided with technological innovation, modifying relationship development and intimacy. For instance, the automobile and the entertainment industry (i.e., movie theaters, the drive-in culture, dance halls) provided dating couples with inexpensive opportunities to get much further away from their daily routines and parental control starting in the 20th century (Bogle, 2008; Illouz, 1997). Towards the beginning of the 21st century, researchers noticed again how technology started to change the dating landscape. This time, online dating services facilitated getting acquainted with a larger dating pool (Clark, 1998; David & Cambre, 2016).

Because of these new dating technologies, people were no longer restricted to dating those within their physical social circle but instead had the opportunity to connect with prospective partners outside their pre-existing networks (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008). This ease of

[11] Based on Timmermans, E., & Courtois, C. (revised and resubmitted). From swiping to casual sex and/or committed relationships: Exploring the experiences of Tinder users. *The Information Society*.

connectivity and the seemingly limitless possibilities offered by online dating sites and mobile dating applications has received considerable critical attention, as online daters experienced a certain degree of feasibility when entering the dating market (Hardey, 2004).

In fact, both researchers and the popular media argue that it has become easier than ever to find casual sexual partners using mobile dating applications that connect potential partners within the vicinity (e.g., Bhattacharya, 2015; David & Cambre, 2016; Race 2015; Sales, 2015). Especially Grindr, a location-based mobile dating application predominantly targeted at men who have sex with men has received quite some research attention related to sexual risk behavior (e.g., Landovitz et al., 2013) and its influence on casual sexual interactions (e.g., Licoppe, Rivière, Morel, 2016; Race, 2015; Stempfhuber & Liegl, 2016). The growing popularity of Grindr quickly led to the development of heterosexual alternatives, of which Tinder continues to be the dominant leader in Western societies (Duguay, 2017). In 2016, the application was downloaded more than 100 million times and 60% of users were estimated to come from outside North America (Smith, 2017). Yet, despite Tinder's global popularity and the expanding body of literature that started to examine mobile dating applications, it is not quite clear how the mechanic process Tinder imposes on its users influences having sexual or romantic interactions through the use of the application.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, we would like to examine whether Tinder facilitates casual sex, by drawing attention to its affordances that potentially elicit sexual interactions. Designing necessary steps within the Tinder process to illustrate how people go from swiping to meeting will help in gaining a better understanding of the process that generally precedes the casual sexual interaction/relationship between Tinder users. Second, empirical studies show that Tinder is not merely restricted to casual sexual interactions, but also leads to committed relationships (e.g., Lefebvre, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3). Therefore, we aim to investigate whether Tinder allows for the formation of committed relationships, in which either the Tinder meeting per se or the casual sexual interaction/relationship will eventually lead to the formation of committed relationships.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF INTIMACY

Although the practice of dating made romantic encounters more sexually permissive than courting or calling in the previous century could have allowed (Illouz, 1997), there still exists some debate on whether it was the actual sexual behavior that changed or mostly the attitudes towards that behavior in the second half of the twentieth century (e.g., Reay, 2014; Wade, 2017; Whyte, 1990). Technological and economic developments in the first half of the 20th century made money a central component of romantic encounters. It has been argued that men would generally treat

women to various forms of amusement (e.g., drinks, theatre tickets) in exchange for small sexual favors such as kissing or petting (Bogle, 2008; Illouz, 1997). However, it was the legalization of abortion and the accessibility of contraception in the second half of the 20th century, that finally freed women from much of the fear previously associated with sex (e.g., maternal death, repetitive pregnancies; Hekma & Giami, 2014). These sociological breakthroughs could make sexual fulfilment a decisive factor when questioning their relationship continuance (Gross & Simmons, 2002). Yet, women were still most likely to engage in premarital sex with their future spouse only, indicating that the "sexual revolution" was rather a shift in permissive attitudes towards uncommitted sex than a change in actual behavior (Whyte, 1990).

Ideas towards intimacy and relationships, on the other hand, were certainly subjected to considerable transformations. During the past century, the romantic love ideal had to make place for a "genuinely detraditionalized cultural framework: intimacy as what Giddens calls 'pure' or 'confluent' love" (Gross & Simmons, 2002, p. 535). Whereas romantic love implies the quest for the perfect partner and emphasizes monogamy, confluent love is rather focused on chasing the perfect relationship and emphasizes reciprocal emotional and sexual pleasure. To secure continuance of the relationship within confluent love, each partner needs to gain sufficient benefit, which permits negotiations between partners that do not follow general or traditional rules. In this way, sexual exclusiveness is only a necessary given of the relationship when both partners deem it desirable (Giddens, 1992).

Another aspect of relationships that experienced some degree of modification, is the idea of commitment. Whereas lifelong commitment was central to romantic love, self-development is a core feature of confluent love. Once partners begin to diverge in their common values, interests, and identities, the relationship loses its essence and needs to be dissolved. Hence, partners in a confluent love relationship are committed only contingently (Gross & Simmons, 2002). Consequently, the idea of confluent love has been repeatedly paired with the rise of serial monogamy, in which "individuals have several primary partners over time, but no more than one concurrently" (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005, p. 100). Yet, the transition out of these relatively short committed relationships is rather complex, as studies on relationship discontinuation reveal that over half of couples who break up continue a sexual relationship after breaking up (Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2012).

From 2000 on, researchers noticed a tremendous shift in dating and mating behaviors on the college campus, repeatedly referred to as "hooking up", casual sexual encounters, or casual sexual relationships (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Garcia et al., 2012; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Instead of having one-on-one dates, college students would gather in groups and eventually have

one-time only sexual interactions with strangers or acquaintances they meet at such gatherings, ranging from kissing and oral sex to sexual intercourse (Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). Compared to emerging adults in the 90s, those in the 2004-2012 cohort did not report a higher number of sex partners, but were more likely to report having had sex with a friend or acquaintance (Monto & Carey, 2014). Such findings thus raise the question where emerging adults continue to find friends and acquaintances interested in pursuing sexual encounters or relationships with a strong sexual focus.

AFFORDANCES OF MOBILE DATING APPLICATIONS

According to Hjarvard (2013), a medium's influence on a micro-social level depends on the concrete affordances (i.e., material and technical features and social and aesthetic qualities) of the medium in question. Such affordances structure interaction between actor and object by making certain actions possible and ruling out other actions (Gibson, 1979). The main affordances that potentially influence (sexual) encounters through Tinder as a mobile dating application are the *mobility*, *immediacy*, *proximity*, and *visual dominance* affordances.

First, the *mobility affordance* encourages people to use Tinder in different locations, which enhances the spontaneity and frequency of use (Chan, 2017; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017). Second, the notification system incorporated in Tinder alerts users about new messages and/or matches, even when not using the application, thereby accelerating the tempo of interactions and allowing for more immediacy (Yeo & Fung, 2016). Third, by using the smartphone's geolocative information, Tinder has access to users' geolocative information and display potential partners who are in the immediate vicinity (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015). This proximity affordance influences instantaneous arrangements of meetings in real life (Yeo & Fung, 2016). Interaction patterns on Tinder are thus more oriented towards immediacy and proximity compared to online dating sites (Licoppe et al., 2016).

Such affordances of proximity and immediacy can foster mobile intimacy by overlaying geographic space "with an electronic position and relational presence, which is emotional and social" (Hjorth, 2013, p. 113). This mobile intimacy and co-presence on the app in turn intensify the immediacy and ability of users to meet through Tinder (Duguay, 2017) and have "fast sexual encounters" (Licoppe et al., 2016, p. 2545). Moreover, compared to interactions in an offline environment, Tinder's swipe interface offers the ability to pursue numerous (sexual) relationship initiation interests simultaneously, instead of being limited to only one conversation at a time (Lefebvre, 2017).

Finally, the visual dominance affordance refers to the idea that the selection process of potential partners is mostly based on images which take up the whole screen (Chan, 2017; David & Cambre, 2016). Tinder users get to see one picture of another Tinder user at a time and decide with a quick thumb movement whether they want to match and potentially meet the other user in person (David & Cambre, 2016). Being mainly based on physical appearances, some researchers argue that these interactions remain superficial as they are based mostly on one or more profile photos (Hobbs, Owen, & Gerber, 2017).

Notably, however, affordances can also be influenced by cultural conventions and interpretations that surround the object (Hjarvard, 2013). Initially having promoted itself as a useful tool when wanting to participate in hookups (Duguay, 2017), the main cultural convention surrounding Tinder is it being merely a hookup application (e.g., Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015; David & Cambre, 2016; Mason, 2016; Sales, 2015). Consequently, it could be possible that Tinder attracts users with mainly sexual purposes and that sexual references made on the application are more likely to be tolerated.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Recently, an expanding body of literature has started to examine mobile dating applications. In particular, research attention has been focused on motives for using such apps (e.g., Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Van De Wiele & Tong, 2014; Ward, 2016; Chapter 3) and its relation to dating (e.g., Chan, 2017; Hobbs, et al., 2017; Lefebvre, 2017) and casual sex (e.g., Chan, 2017; Choi et al., 2016; Landovitz et al., 2013; Licoppe et al., 2016). Yet, it is not clear how necessary, primary steps in this process (i.e., swiping, matching, having conversations on Tinder) are related to eventually having sexual or romantic outcomes.

Tinder users indirectly select potential partners based on account settings that force users to determine sex preferences (only men, only women, or men and women), geographical distance, and the age range of the love interest. Tinder's repetitive and fast-paced swiping is designed to invoke ongoing participation by presenting one profile at a time that consists of information imported from Facebook such as a potential partner's name, photo, age, and an indication of mutual friends and interests (Duguay, 2017). The simplification of choice by reducing it to a binary specifically demands a firm, decisive, micro-action that encourages the acceleration of swiping on Tinder (David & Cambre, 2016).

In contrast to online dating sites which often use mathematical algorithms to select potential partners for users based on personality characteristics and mutual interests (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012), Tinder's algorithm is bilateral, meaning that users need

to match in order to be able to start a conversation with one another (Zhang, 2016). This implies that the swiping process on Tinder remains unanimous until both users right swipe and match, thereby emphasizing dynamics of mutual attraction and consent rather than solely the proximity affordance (e.g., Grindr users can contact any other user within a certain distance) or the co-presence (e.g., users can contact any other user on online dating websites) (MacKee, 2016). One common swiping strategy to increase the number of matches is to swipe right on all potential partners and filter out options afterwards, which Lefebvre (2017) refers to as the shotgun approach. Following this reasoning, it might be that the odds of having Tinder matches will increase when users have a higher number of right swipes. Therefore, we predict that the number of swipes will be positively associated with the number of matches (**H1**).

Matching on Tinder, however, still does not guarantee an offline encounter with another Tinder user. After a successful matching process, a physical meeting is dependent upon either (a) the number of other-instigated conversations or (b) the number of self-instigated conversations. Yet, we predict that the number of successful matches will be positively associated with the number of both self and other-instigated conversations (**H2**). Once two users engage in a conversation, the Tinder interaction might shift from an online to an offline context. However, there is a certain skill needed to have others participate in a self-instigated conversation and convince them to agree to have an offline meeting (Zytko et al., 2014). We thus expect a linear association between the number of both self and other-instigated successful conversations and the number of Tinder meetings (**H3**).

Given the cultural convention that Tinder is merely a hookup application (e.g., Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015; David & Cambre, 2016; Mason, 2016; Sales, 2015), it might be that users are more likely to have a sexual motive when using Tinder or at least perceive the sexual references of other users as normative behavior. However, not only sexual motives were related to an increased number of reported casual sexual interactions with other Tinder users, but also, for instance, using Tinder while travelling (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3). Another study conducted in Hong Kong found that the odds for reporting a casual sexual partner were higher for individuals who used mobile dating applications for more than 12 months (Choi et al., 2016), suggesting that affordances and features related to mobile dating applications such as Tinder might lead to casual sexual interactions. Consequently, we hypothesize that the number of Tinder meetings will be positively associated with an increased engagement in both one-night stands and casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users (**H4**).

While it has often been assumed that mobile dating applications are used to expand sexual networks (e.g., Chan, 2017; Choi et al., 2016), both qualitative (e.g., Hobbs et al., 2017; Ward, 2016)

and quantitative (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3) studies suggest that several individuals also use these new technologies to pursue meaningful relationships. By connecting the Tinder account to Facebook and other third-party platforms (e.g., Instagram, Spotify), verifiability becomes compulsory, thereby regulating (sexual) self-presentation (e.g., Tinder users can only choose profile pictures from their Facebook account) and reducing anonymity. Fake accounts and disrespectful users can be reported and pictures cannot be exchanged on the app, thereby making it impossible to exchange (unwanted) sexual explicit material on Tinder (Duguay, 2017; MacKee, 2016). Consequently, this authenticity affordance makes the app more attractive to search for romantic partners within the vicinity. Moreover, Licoppe and colleagues (2016) argue that sexual interactions between strangers are not a recognized and shared practice within heterosexual circles and thus speculate that tools targeted at a heterosexual population might lead to a wider distribution of relational orientations resulting in committed relationships. Moreover, Tinder's post-launch marketing includes success stories in which couples thank Tinder for helping them to meet by sharing engagement and wedding photos (Duguay, 2017). We therefore predict that the number of Tinder meetings will be positively associated with the number of committed relationships with other Tinder users (**H5**).

Previous studies also found that one important motive for engagement in casual sexual encounters or casual sexual relationships is to evaluate the partner's suitability for a long-term relationship (Cunningham & Barbee, 2008). As casual sexual relationships have the potential to eventually become a committed relationship (Mongeau, Knight, Williams, Eden, & Shaw, 2013) and people generally express a desire for emotional connection to the sexual partner (Epstein et al., 2009; Paul & Hayes, 2002), we hypothesize that the number of one-night stands and casual sexual relationships will be positively associated with the number of committed relationships with Tinder users (**H6**). In addition, it is possible that the relationship between the number of Tinder meetings and the number of committed relationships will be mediated by the number of Tinder one-night stands and casual sexual relationships (**H7**). Finally, previous studies have shown that accounting for Tinder motives is crucial in gaining a better understanding of Tinder outcomes (e.g., Chan, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3). Therefore, we predict that Tinder motives (i.e., relationship motive, sexual motive, and social motive) will be associated with offline Tinder outcomes (i.e., meetings, one-night stands, casual sexual relationships, and committed relationships) and having a serious relationship and sexual experience will moderate this association (**H8**).

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

A total of 2,284 emerging adults (ages 18 – 29) filled in an online survey about their Tinder use. For the purpose of this chapter, participants that were not current users of Tinder (n = 1,237[12]) were deleted from the sample. In addition, nine participants were deleted from all analyses due to untruthful responses (e.g., having had more than 20 serious relationships while only being 19 years old). As a result, 1,038 Dutch-speaking Tinder users remained in the dataset, who were on average approximately 22 years old (M = 21.80; SD = 2.35; Range = 18-29). More females (59%) than males participated in the study. The large majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (91%), was single (82%) and has ever had sexual intercourse (80%).

To access the population of interest, Facebook sampling was used as Tinder users are required to have a Facebook account. Two graduate students assisted in data collection and administrators of popular Facebook pages (e.g., confessions pages, popular magazines) were asked to spread the survey link on their Facebook page to reach a large and distinct population of Tinder users. Facebook has often been applied as a successful research tool for social scientists, since it offers a cheap and fast way to collect self-reported data of good quality (Bhutta, 2012; Kosinski, Matz, & Gosling, 2015). Participation was voluntarily and participants did not receive any incentive for their participation.

Measures

Demographics and relationship variables. Respondents reported their sex (0 = male, 1 = female), age, relationship status (0 = single, 1 = in a relationship), and whether they have had sexual intercourse (0 = no, 1 = yes). These variables were added as men were significantly more likely to report they had a sexual motive for using Tinder (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017b; Chapter 4), and it is plausible to assume that people in a relationship and those without sexual intercourse will behave differently regarding their use of the application.

Tinder account and motives. Respondents indicated when they created their Tinder account (0 = less than half a year ago, 1 = more than half a year ago, 2 = more than one year ago). Experience with using Tinder possibly influences the use of the app, as users' process of trial and error adjusts their expectations and goals related to the use of the app. Furthermore, three subscales of the Tinder Motives Scale (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3) were used.

[12] 572 of those participants indicated to have used Tinder in the past but were not actively using Tinder at the moment of inquiry.

Tinder users indicated to what extent they used Tinder for relationship seeking (five items, e.g., "I use Tinder to find someone for a serious relationship"), sexual experience (six items, e.g., "I use Tinder to find a one-night-stand"), and socializing (four items, e.g., "I use Tinder to make new friends). All subscales had good reliabilities and were averaged to form a scale of relationship motive (M = 3.59, SD = 1.54, α = .92), sexual motive (M = 2.75, SD = 1.48, α = .92), and social motive (M = 4.19, SD = 1.38, α = .84).

Online Tinder behavior. Respondents were asked to rate how many in 10 Tinder users they would on average (1) swipe right (M = 2.93, SD = 2.43), (2) match with (M = 3.90, SD = 2.65), and (3) start a conversation with (M = 2.42, SD = 2.78). In addition, they were asked how many of 10 Tinder matches would start a conversation with them (M = 2.80, SD = 2.17).

Offline Tinder behavior. Tinder users were asked whether they ever met a person they matched with on Tinder. Participants that had an offline meeting with a Tinder match (n = 571; 55%) received follow-up questions. On average, people would have three offline meetings (M = 2.92, SD = 3.55). Twenty-three percent of those with offline Tinder meetings reported to have had at least one one-night stand (M = 0.43, SD = 1.16) and 31% engaged in a casual sexual relationship with another Tinder user (M = 0.57, SD = 1.24), whereas 27% started a committed relationship with another Tinder user (M = 0.37, SD = 1.57).

Interaction relationship status and sexual experience with Tinder motives. The continuous variables relationship motive, sexual motive, and social motive were centered in order to compute the interaction between on the one hand the dichotomous variable relationship status and the centered motive variables, and on the other hand the dichotomous variable sexual experience and the centered motive variables.

RESULTS

To examine our hypotheses, several regression models were fitted. Since the dependent variables were all count variables and the variance was generally larger than the mean for these dependent variables (Gardner, Mulvey, & Shaw, 1995), negative binomial models were estimated using Mplus version 6.12 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015). For the offline Tinder variables, which included a large number of zero counts (46.5% for meetings, 87.5% for one-night stands, 82.8% for casual sexual relationships, and 85.2% for committed relationships), zero-inflated negative binomial regression models were estimated. These zero values could have two meanings: participants never had an offline encounter with another Tinder user (which was the case for

approximately 45% of the sample) or participants indicated not to have engaged in one or more of the aforementioned Tinder behaviors.

Table 14 summarizes the results of the regression models for the online Tinder behaviors. Sex appeared to be an important predictor for all three dependent count variables. The odds for females to have matches with other Tinder users were 2.34 times higher than the odds for males to have matches. A similar trend emerged for other-instigated conversations: the odds of having other Tinder users start a conversation are 34% higher for females. Contrarily, the odds for males to start a conversation with another Tinder user were 2.86 times higher than the odds for females. Age was only significantly associated with having Tinder matches, indicating that the odds to have matches for young emerging adults increase with 4% compared to the odds for older emerging adults. Contrary to our expectations, the number of swipes did not influence the number of matches. **Hypothesis 1** could not be supported.

Table 14. *Negative binomial models for online Tinder behaviors.*

	Model 1 Matches			Model 2 User starts conversations			Model 3 Other starts conversations		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Sex	.85***	.05	2.34	-1.04***	.10	.35	.29***	.06	1.34
Age	-.04***	.01	.96	.02	.02	1.02	.01	.01	1.01
≥ 6 Months Tinder Account	-.01	.05	.99	.05	.09	1.05	-.06	.05	.94
≥ 12 Months Tinder Account	.04	.04	1.04	-.02	.08	.98	-.05	.05	.95
Serious Relationship	.07	.05	1.07	.17	.09	1.19	.12*	.05	1.13
Sexual Experience	.25***	.06	1.28	.03	.10	1.03	.02	.06	1.02
Sexual Motive	-.06	.04	.94	.18**	.06	1.20	.07	.04	1.07
Relationship Motive	-.04	.03	.96	.16*	.06	1.17	.02	.04	1.02
Social Motive	.02	.04	1.02	.00	.08	1.00	.02	.04	1.02
Serious Relationship * Sexual Motive	.06	.03	1.06	-.01	.06	.99	.05	.04	1.05
Serious Relationship * Relationship Motive	.06*	.03	1.06	-.02	.06	.98	.03	.03	1.03
Serious Relationship * Social Motive	-.01	.04	.99	.05	.07	1.05	.04	.04	1.04
Sexual Experience * Sexual Motive	.05	.04	1.05	-.15*	.04	.86	-.09*	.04	.91
Sexual Experience * Relationship Motive	.01	.04	1.01	-.09	.07	.91	-.02	.04	.98
Sexual Experience * Social Motive	-.01	.04	.99	.17*	.08	1.19	-.02	.04	.98
# Swipes	-.02	.01	.98						
# Matches				.01	.02	1.01	.15***	.01	1.16

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Furthermore, having a sexual or relationship motive influenced self-instigating a conversation. The odds of starting a conversation on Tinder increased with 20% for Tinder users with a sexual motive and 17% for Tinder users with a relationship motive. In addition, having had sexual intercourse moderated the effect of sexual motive and social motive on starting a conversation on Tinder. While the odds of starting a conversation were 16% higher for Tinder users with a sexual motive but no sexual experience, the odds of starting a conversation were 19% higher for Tinder users with a social motive and sexual experience. Again, in contrast with our expectations, the number of matches did not influence the number of self-instigated conversations. Regarding other-instigated conversations, however, the number of matches increased the odds of having others starting a conversation on Tinder with 16% for users with a higher number of matches on. **Hypothesis 2** could thus be partially supported.

Table 15 reports on the offline Tinder behaviors. **Hypothesis 3**, which predicted a positive association between the number of both self-instigated and other-instigated conversations and the number of offline meetings, could be supported. However, despite being significant, these odds appeared to be rather low. While the odds of meeting up with a Tinder match were 13% higher when the number of other-instigated conversations increased, the odds of meeting up with a Tinder match were only 4% higher when the number of self-instigated conversations increased. Several other significant associations appeared. To summarize: the odds of meeting with another Tinder user were higher for females (28%), older emerging adults (9%), Tinder users who have their account at least six (57%) or twelve (141%) months, for Tinder users who have had sexual intercourse in the past (161%) and for Tinder users with a higher score on the relationship motive (65%) or the social motive (19%).

Hypothesis 4, which assumed a positive association between the number of Tinder meetings and the number of casual sexual encounters and relationships with other Tinder users could be supported. The odds of having a one-night stand with another Tinder user were 36% higher and the odds of having a casual sexual relationship with another Tinder user were 34% higher for Tinder users with a larger number of offline Tinder meetings. Albeit a bit lower, the odds of having a committed relationship with another Tinder user were 13% higher for Tinder users with a larger number of offline Tinder meetings, thereby supporting **Hypothesis 5**.

Table 15. *Zero-inflated negative binomial models for offline Tinder behaviors.*

	Model 4 Offline Meetings			Model 5 One-Night Stands			Model 6 Casual Sexual Relationships			Model 7 Committed Relationships		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Sex	.25*	.12	1.28	-.33	.23	.72	1.00***	.22	2.72	.24	.21	1.27
Age	.09***	.02	1.09	.08	.04	1.08	.04	.04	1.04	-.01	.04	.99
≥ 6 Months Account	.45***	.12	1.57	.28	.27	1.32	.49*	.24	1.63	.00	.22	1.00
≥ 12 Months Account	.88***	.10	2.41	.18	.24	1.20	.70**	.21	2.01	.08	.21	1.08
Serious Relationship	-.06	.12	.94	.25	.26	1.28	-.31	.26	.73	1.49***	.18	4.44
Sexual Experience	.96***	.17	2.61							.57	.37	1.77
Sexual Motive	-.07	.10	.93	.28**	.08	1.32	.41***	.07	1.51	.02	.24	1.02
Relationship Motive	.50***	.10	1.65	.05	.09	1.05	-.15*	.07	.86	.10	.21	1.11
Social Motive	.17**	.12	1.19	-.11	.10	.90	.10	.08	1.11	-.18	.25	.84
Serious Relationship * Sexual Motive	-.05	.07	.95	-.00	.15	1.00	.14	.14	1.15	.02	.12	1.02
Serious Relationship * Relationship Motive	.08	.08	1.08	.02	.18	1.02	.17	.16	1.19	.10	.12	1.11
Serious Relationship * Social Motive	.05	.09	1.05	-.07	.19	.93	.17	.18	1.19	-.02	.13	.98
Sexual Experience * Sexual Motive	.19	.10	1.21							-.15	.25	.86
Sexual Experience * Relationship Motive	-.34**	.11	.71							.18	.21	1.20
Sexual Experience * Social Motive	.02	.12	1.02							.13	.25	1.14
# Successful user-instigated conversations	.06***	.02	1.06									
# Successful other-instigated conversations	.13***	.02	1.14									
# Meets				.31***	.03	1.36	.29***	.03	1.34	.12***	.02	1.13
# One-Night Stands										-.02	.07	.98
# CSR										-.00	.07	1.00

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Sexual motive appeared to be an important predictor for both one-night stands and casual sexual relationships. The odds of having a one-night stand with another Tinder user were 32% higher for users with a sexual motive, and the odds of having a casual sexual relationship were 51% higher for users with a sexual motive. Interestingly, Tinder users' sex predicted engagement in casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users, but not one-night stands. The odds of having casual sexual relationships with another Tinder user were 172% higher for females. In addition, the odds of having a casual sexual relationship with another Tinder user for those who have their account for at least 6 or 12 months were respectively 63% and 101% higher. Relationship motive, on the contrary, was negatively associated with having casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users. The odds of having a casual sexual relationship with another Tinder user were 16% higher for users with low scores on relationship motive. Finally, having a serious relationship appeared to be the only other significant association with the number of committed relationships with another Tinder user. The odds of having a committed relationship with another Tinder user within the referenced period were 344% higher for Tinder users in a committed relationship.

Hypothesis 6 could not be supported. The number of one-night stands and casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users is not significantly associated with the number of committed relationships with other Tinder users. **Hypothesis 7**, which assumed the relationship between the number of Tinder meetings and the number of committed relationships will be mediated by the number of Tinder one-night stands and casual sexual relationships, could also not be supported. **Figure 6** shows that all indirect effects between Tinder meetings and committed relationships were not significant. Finally, **Hypothesis 8** could only be partially supported. While motives played an important role when it comes to predicting Tinder outcomes as described above, the dichotomous variable serious relationship did not seem to moderate the relationship between any of the three Tinder motives and offline Tinder outcomes. Regarding the interaction effects between sexual experience and the Tinder motives, only the interaction effect between sexual experience and relationship motive was significant for offline Tinder meetings. The odds of having offline Tinder meetings are 41% higher for virgins with a relationship motive, but not for those with sexual experience and a relationship motive.

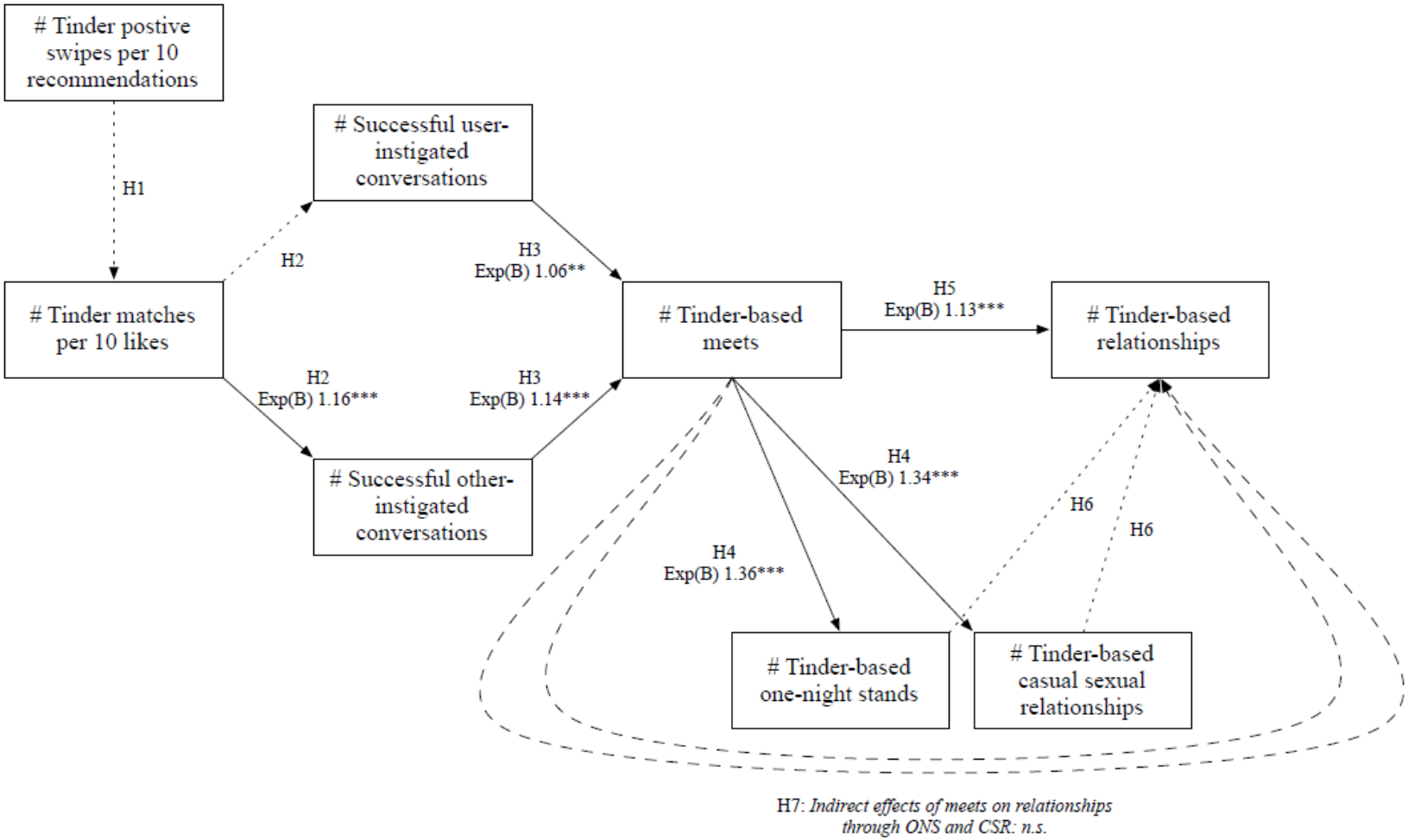

Figure 6. *Visualization of the Tinder process.*

DISCUSSION

This chapter was undertaken to examine how users go from swiping to romantic or sexual encounters as illustrated in **Figure 6**. While swiping is a necessary first step to get acquainted with other users, our results suggest that the swiping quantity does not guarantee a higher number of Tinder matches. Women in our sample were significantly more likely to have matches than men, a finding that resonates with findings related to online dating users (Rudder, 2015). It is possible that women are more selective in their swiping process compared to men, thereby decreasing the number of successful matches for men. In her study on mobile phone usage, Shade (2007) shows how advertising campaigns reinforce femininity and heteronormativity. In a similar vein, given Tinder's status as hookup app (e.g., Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015; David & Cambre, 2016; Duguay, 2017; Mason, 2016), it could be possible that women are more selective in their swiping behavior in order to, for instance, avoid those only interested in sexual encounters. A reasoning that seems to be confirmed by Lefebvre's (2017) study in which male users were more likely to swipe to increase the odds for matches compared to female users. Another explanation lies in the freemium business model of the application, in which users are charged for certain premium features including those designed to increase the number of matches (e.g., Tinder Boost). Part of Tinder's success lies in the thrill of getting a new match (Zhang, 2016). When the swiping process is generating too many successful matches, it undermines Tinder's business model as the premium matching feature becomes superfluous.

The number of successful Tinder matches was only positively associated with the number of other-instigated conversations but not the number of self-instigated conversations. Again, sex differences were found, in that women were less likely to start messages but more likely to receive messages compared to men. This seems to be in line with both the offline and online dating script, in which women are more likely to be waiting to receive messages (online dating script) or to be asked on a date (offline dating script), whereas men were supposed to initiate the first contact and ask the date (Rose & Frieze, 1989; Rudder, 2015). It thus seems that Tinder continues to reinforce traditional gender roles, a trend that has also been observed in studies related to mobile phone usage (e.g., Cardoso, Gomes, Espanha, & Araújo, 2007; Ganito, 2010). Tinder motives also increased odds of starting a conversation: those with a sexual or relationship motive were more likely to start a conversation on Tinder.

Both the number of successful self-instigated and other-instigated conversations were positively associated with the number of Tinder meetings. Notably, the longer users have their Tinder account, the higher their odds of having Tinder meetings. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, as long as a medium gratifies a user's needs, the user will continue using

this medium (Ruggiero, 2000). It is therefore highly likely that users with successful Tinder meetings continue to use the application and thus have had the application for a longer time period. Alternatively, it is also possible that having the application for a long time provides more opportunities to meet other users in a physical setting.

The primary goal of this study, however, was to provide an answer to the question whether the affordances of Tinder facilitate engagement in casual sex. Our findings seem to imply some degree of ambiguity when attempting to clarify this issue. On the one hand, our study shows that less than half of Tinder users in this sample actually met someone in a physical setting they matched with on Tinder, thereby questioning the successfulness of Tinder in creating an application that brings people together. However, such findings might be country or sample specific, as in another U.S. study, 77% of the sample reported to have met matches (Lefebvre, 2017). On the other hand, it is important to note that more than one fifth of people that actually met someone in a physical setting, had a one-night stand with at least one other Tinder user. These numbers are even higher for casual sexual relationships, as almost one third of people that met another Tinder user in a physical setting has had a casual sexual relationship with at least one other Tinder user. The number of Tinder meetings was significantly and positively associated with both the number of one-night stands and the number of casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users.

Interestingly, women were more likely to report a higher number of casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users than men. Contrarily, the literature on casual sex either finds no significant gender differences (e.g., Bisson & Levine, 2009; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Vrangalova, 2015) or reports that male emerging adults are more likely to engage in casual sex compared to female emerging adults (e.g., Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2015; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Yet, this study would not be the first to report opposite findings, as female respondents in a German sample also reported more casual sex compared to male respondents (Kaspar, Buß, Rogner, & Gnambs, 2016). In addition, a growing body of literature argues that too little attention has been paid to potential positive effects of having casual sex (Vrangalova, 2015), that women do receive several emotional and physical benefits from casual sex (e.g., Owen, Quirk, & Fincham, 2014), and that attitudes towards casual sex play a significant role in experiencing the benefits of it (Kalish & Kimmel, 2011; Vrangalova & Ong, 2014). As women are more likely to have a higher number of matches, this supply of potential (sexual) partners possibly empowers them to select and potentially create the (casual sexual) relationships of their own preference. Thereby suggesting that women are becoming power users of technology and starting to use mobile dating applications such as Tinder to perform new cultural meanings (Ganito, 2010).

Since the sexual motive also appeared to be a significant predictor of engagement in both one-night stands and casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users, it might be that the cultural conventions surrounding the application (i.e., Tinder is a hookup application), have influenced its use as a purpose for finding sexual interactions. In this way, Tinder serves as a tool that facilitates sexual encounters for those that are looking for it, a similar pattern that was found in studies on Grindr (e.g., Licoppe et al., 2016). However, not reporting this sexual motive does not necessarily mean that such a sexual outcome will be absent. This is clearly illustrated in a study conducted in the UK (Bhattacharya, 2015) in which a female respondent seemingly considered Tinder's chatting to increase the possibility for casual sex to happen. The matching hypothesis aids in a better understanding of these findings. According to this hypothesis, people are most motivated to pursue romantic relationships with others whose level of physical attractiveness matches their own (Berscheid, Dion, Hatfield, & Walster, 1971). Applied to Tinder, the matching hypothesis thus assumes that Tinder users are only motivated to meet other users in an offline setting, when they perceive the other user's level of attractiveness compatible to their own. Taking into account the user interface of Tinder that firmly emphasizes appearances (David & Cambre, 2016), it is plausible to assume that Tinder users will feel a certain degree of mutual attraction when meeting in a physical setting. Consequently, it is not surprising that a significant proportion of offline Tinder meetings end up being sexual encounters, since users are now "nearby" and likely to experience some level of mutual physical attraction, even if not being interested to pursue a romantic relationship.

Tinder meetings do not only generate casual sexual encounters but are also associated with a higher number of committed relationships with other Tinder users. More than a quarter of offline Tinder encounters result in the formation of a committed relationship, indicating that Tinder is not "just a hookup application" as often assumed in public discourse. Based on a couple of findings from the literature, we also argued it is plausible that sexual encounters will eventually lead to committed relationships in a society that replaced dating by hooking up when it comes to relationships formation (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). Yet, the number of one-night stands and casual sexual relationships was not directly associated with the number of committed relationships, nor did it mediate the relationship between the number of Tinder meetings and the number of committed relationships with people met on Tinder.

Finally, motives played an important role when it comes to studying Tinder outcomes. Having a sexual motive was positively associated with reporting a higher number of one-night stands and casual sexual relationships, whereas having a relationship motive was negatively associated with reporting a higher number of casual sexual relationships. Interestingly, having a

relationship motive was not associated with reporting a higher number of committed relationships, indicating that Tinder might not be that successful in gratifying a relationship need. Relationship status and sexual experience did not seem to moderate these associations, implying that the motives that are linked to offline Tinder outcomes are not different for singles and virgins compared to users in a committed relationships and users with sexual experience..

Limitations and Future Directions

The main limitation of this chapter is its cross-sectional nature, which does not allow to investigate Tinder interactions over time. Future studies could use a longitudinal design to track if and how many casual sexual relationships will eventually lead to a committed relationship. In addition, future studies might want to include ex Tinder users in their study design, as one reason to quit Tinder – or any mobile dating application of the sort – is when the user gratifies one of his or her primary needs. Finding a romantic or casual partner is often a motive to use Tinder (Hobbs et al., 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Ward, 2016; Chapter 3), which means that users are likely to delete their Tinder account once they find their romantic or casual partner until they experience the need to obtain this goal again.

Second, while our operationalization of casual sex included the two most common forms of contemporary sexual intimacies (i.e., one-night stands and casual sexual relationships), we do not have any information on the type of casual sexual relationships respondents are referring to. While it could be that casual sexual relationships formed on Tinder are merely sexual in nature for both partners, an alternative possibility is that at least one of the partners in the casual sexual relationship wants to pursue a committed relationship, but failed to do so because of external factors such as distance (i.e., while Tinder users match based on distance preferences, it might be that two people match and meet in a location they do not frequently visit), time (e.g., the Tinder user does currently not have time to pursue the sexual encounter further), and disinterest of the other partner. Due to the quantitative design of this study, our findings lack context regarding the reported casual sexual relationships and encounters on Tinder, and qualitative studies are warranted to further investigate this topic. If Tinder leads to casual sexual relationships that eventually evolve in committed relationships or are dissolved because only one of the partners wants to pursue a committed relationships, our findings tell a different story compared to when the casual sexual relationship remains merely sexual.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

Based on our findings, we conclude that Tinder seems to support both the formation of committed relationships as the engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships. While

agencies behind the development of mobile and online dating technologies support the idea of short-term casual sexual interactions, as they will redirect users to their services seen the impermanence of casual sexual encounters, public discourse surrounding these dating technologies and users usage of contemporary dating technologies also influence outcomes. Moreover, our findings stress the importance of taking into account gender dynamics (e.g., women have more Tinder matches than men, men are more likely to start a conversation on Tinder) when studying swiping and meeting processes on Tinder.

There are also a number of practical implications for our findings for Tinder and its users. Foremost, given that a decent amount of users in this and other studies (e.g., Lefebvre, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3) report finding a committed relationship on the app, cultural conventions surrounding Tinder do not tell the whole story and might misguide users. In addition, seen the crucial role of motives in studying Tinder outcomes (see also Chan, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a; Chapter 3), it would be interesting if users somewhere in the application could indicate their Tinder motive, to avoid confusion and disappointment in interactions with other users.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

About a century ago, marriage was more of an economic and political institution in which people had rigid, gender-based expectations about what each person would bring to a marriage (Coontz, 2006). After the idea of dating had been introduced into society, people used to marry someone who lived close, usually within six months, and only expanded their horizons when those within the neighborhood were no longer available (e.g., Bossard, 1932; Ellsworth Jr., 1948). However, after the sexual revolution, many of these marriages started to dissolve as love suddenly became central to marriage (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992). While there were several technological changes that influenced the course of dating (e.g., the automobile, contraception), the influence of communication technologies remained limited, as they were not that omnipresent at that time. I once asked my parents about their experiences with communication technology back when they were dating in the early eighties. They exchanged letters and had to be absolutely clear about the how and when of their dates. My grandparents on my father's side did not have a phone, so if my mother wanted to reach him, she would first have to call his neighbors and wait on the phone while the neighbors checked whether my father was home and available to answer. Without having lived through these experiences, I could not even imagine how hard that would have been.

Today, we tell a whole different story as we can barely imagine our relationships without our mediated interactions. Partners, whether dating or married, no longer depend on their proximity to each other. Mediated communication now facilitates interactions via multiple channels (i.e., text, voice, image, and video), even between potential partners (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). Meanwhile, the course of dating has known some changes as well, as it is no longer perceived as a pathway to marriage (Bailey, 1988). Instead, contemporary dating practices have become an opportunity for mutual enjoyment, exploration, and gratification (Eaton, Rose, Interligi, Fernandez, & McHugh, 2016; McAnulty & Cann, 2012).

These contemporary dating practices usually involve a high amount of sexual activity between two dating partners before they move on to any form of commitment or exclusivity, leading some to wonder whether these practices are still considered dating (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). Moreover, some researchers argued that it is in part because of new communication technologies that the course of dating has become characterized by high levels of casual sexual intimacy (e.g., Bauman, 2003; Goluboff, 2015). By applying the theoretical framework of mediatization, this dissertation aimed to unravel the association between new media and casual

sexual intimacy on a micro-level, while at the same time being aware of changes in media, as well as, cultural and societal changes that might have possibly contributed to changes in casual sexual intimacy.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF INTIMACY IN BELGIUM

Findings throughout this dissertation suggest that Flemish emerging adults are well acquainted with casual sexual intimacies such as one-night stands and friends with benefits. In fact, one of the main findings of Chapter 1 is that casual sexual experiences and relationships are certainly not restricted to the college campus in Belgium. Such findings suggest that rather than merely being part of the college experience in Belgium, engagement in casual sex seems to be part of emerging adulthood as a whole. According to researchers, an indisputable cultural change in the past half century is that the transition from adolescence to adulthood has become longer in Western societies (e.g., Arnett, 2004; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Buhl & Lanz, 2007). Consequently, development psychologists argue that people between the ages of 18 and 29 have entered a new stage in life, which they refer to as emerging adulthood (e.g., Arnett, 2000; Nelson & Luster, 2015).

Emerging adults believe that it is important to gain multiple sexual experiences (Ravert, 2009). Indeed, empirical evidence shows that the number of casual sexual partners increased as adolescents transitioned to emerging adulthood (Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2015). Consequently, several researchers tried to situate changes related to casual sexual intimacy in the context of emerging adulthood (e.g., Farvid & Braun, 2017; Lyons, Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2014; Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Shulman and Connolly (2013), for instance, argue that emerging adults need to establish themselves professionally and financially before they can fully engage themselves in a committed relationship. In the meantime, they can fulfill their sexual desires through casual sexual encounters in an age of increased sexual freedom. Instead of avoiding commitment, they might just be postponing it (Farvid & Braun, 2017; Lyons et al., 2014). Indeed, both Bogle (2008) and Wade (2017) remarked in their follow-up interviews with college students who had transitioned out of emerging adulthood that their dating patterns had changed, including a stronger focus towards long-term partnerships.

This can be tied back to Giddens (1992), as these young adults are raised in a culture that values individualism and self-expression. Shulman and Connolly (2013, p. 35) thus suggest that instead of perceiving this life stage as a period of confusion and fruitless exploration, we should perceive it "as a stage where young people are expected to coordinate among the different facets of their lives in order to settle into a long-term partnership." Yet, it is important to note that the

large majority of emerging adults will only engage in casual sexual encounters and relationships when being single (Farvid & Braun, 2017; Chapter 1). For single emerging adults, casual sexual experiences can assist in figuring out what is important for them in future relationships, but the majority of them still desire monogamous sex within the context of a committed relationship (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Moreover, the fact that in all the samples in the current dissertation a decent number of participants reported being in a committed relationship also suggests that the casual sexual script is not the only sexual script during emerging adulthood, which is in line with findings in a U.S. study (see Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013). In Study 2 of Chapter 1, only 14% of students who were in the start of their second year reported to have ever experienced a one-night stand. Yet, these numbers were a bit higher in Study 3 of Chapter 1: 37% of emerging adults reported having had a one-night stand, 46% reported having had a casual sexual relationship, and 32% reported having had ex-sex. Nonetheless, given that not all emerging adults have experienced casual sex implies that casual sex is certainly not a necessary given within emerging adulthood.

Findings from Chapter 1 that could be worrisome, however, is that the participants in Study 2 highly overestimated their peers' engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships. Studies conducted in the U.S. reported similar findings (e.g., Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003) and warn that such findings indicate that casual sex might have become the norm for emerging adults (Wade, 2017). Similarly, in the in-depth interviews conducted in Chapter 1, some respondents expressed feeling like the exception rather than the norm when not liking nor participating in casual sex. Such findings can have serious complications for several reasons and stress the need for more education related to casual sexual intimacies. First, it is possible that emerging adults are not fully aware of the potential physical risks of casual sexual behavior. The Flemish center of expertise for sexual health (Sensoa), for instance, reported that the number of sexually transmitted infections and diseases continues to increase in Belgium (Sensoa, 2017). A recent survey among 1,876 Flemish university students showed that more than two-thirds of Flemish students conducted unsafe sex practices and 4% of respondents indicated to have had chlamydia (Buelens-Terryn & Kerseboom, 2017). Wentland and Reissing (2014) argue that emerging adults involved in casual sexual relationships may even more so fail to use contraception because they experience more familiarity and emotional closeness with partners in casual sexual relationships, and thus might not be aware of the harmful physical consequences of not being exclusive.

Second, some researchers fear that when casual sex has become the norm among emerging adults, it also facilitates a rape culture, in which emerging adults may become victims of sexual assault and rape (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; Stepp, 2007). The findings by Flack and

colleagues (2007) provide evidence for such an assumption. Students with a history of hooking up in their sample were more likely to report incidents of unwanted sexual intercourse, whereas none of the students who had never hooked up reported rape. Similarly, roughly half of participants in the study conducted by Lovejoy (2015) experienced some form of sexual exploitation in a hookup. Consequently, Wade (2017) warns that within a sexual culture that involves relatively high levels of alcohol intoxication, the boundaries of giving consent often become blurred. Especially when sexual scripts are less uniform (e.g., males hold somewhat different scripts than females), there is more potential for misunderstanding, sexual regret, and even coercion (Holman & Sillars, 2012). In the same vein, Kelly (2012) argues that alcohol, the lack of commitment, ambiguous language around defining the relationship, and social pressure all combine to undermine freedom, equality, and safety for female college students who engage in casual sex. While young adults report being aware of the mental consequences of engagement in casual sex, they generally do not reflect on the fact that sexual assault may be a consequence of engagement in casual sex as well (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, & Backstrom, 2009).

Finally, whereas sexual intimacy within a committed relationship is considered psychologically healthy (Diamond & Huebner, 2012), engagement in casual sex is often considered a result or cause of compromised well-being. Several studies found that single emerging adults who engage in casual sex are more likely to be diagnosed with psychological distress (e.g., depression) and experience less psychological well-being (e.g., self-esteem) compared to emerging adults in a committed relationship (e.g., Bersamin et al., 2014; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). For instance, a study examining data from 3,907 students from 30 U.S. colleges and universities found that casual sex was negatively associated with well-being and positively associated with psychological distress (Bersamin et al., 2014).

Notably, gender differences seem to exist when it comes to studying psychological consequences of engagement in casual sex. In a sample of undergraduate students at a large public university in the southeastern United States, female undergraduates who engage in casual sex reported the most depressive symptoms. Contrarily, male students with casual sexual experience reported less depressive symptoms than their male peers who reported to be in a committed relationship (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). Another U.S. study found that for female college students, their worries and negative emotions increased as their number of casual sexual partners expanded, whereas this trend goes the opposite direction for male college students (Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Similarly, in a study conducted in the UK, women rated the experience of one-night stands both less positive (e.g., feeling sexually satisfied) and more negative (e.g., feeling used) compared to men (Campbell, 2008). In general, men tended to report more enjoyment of casual

sex and reported to gain social status by hooking up, whereas women are more likely to express feelings of guilt and regret (Bogle, 2008; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Fisher, Worth, Garcia, & Meredith, 2012). In a longitudinal study, Fielder and Carey (2010) even found that casual penetrative sex led to increased psychological distress in women one and a half months after the first measurement.

While some researchers conclude that hooking up is simply a new way for men to attain sexual gratification from women and that it teaches men to dehumanize women (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Kimmel, 2008; Stepp, 2007), others argue that too little attention has been paid to the potential positive effects of having casual sex (e.g., Vrangalova, 2015). When studying potential benefits, Owen and colleagues found that female students with hookup experience reported that their hooking up behavior enhanced their social network and academic performance (Owen, Quirk, & Fincham, 2014). Other researchers concluded that especially emerging adults with positive attitudes towards casual sex indeed tend to experience the benefits of it (Kalish & Kimmel, 2011; Vrangalova & Ong, 2014). In a short-term longitudinal study, young adults with low well-being before the study even increased their well-being after reporting sexual hookups later in the study (Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011). Vrangalova (2015) noted that statistically significant associations between hooking up and well-being are rather infrequent, and that if hooking up is associated with well-being, it is more likely associated with higher rather than lower well-being. The definitions of casual sexual experiences and relationships used often lay at the base of finding different or contrasting outcomes (Vrangalova, 2015; Brimeyer & Smith, 2012).

Moreover, not all studies found significant associations between casual sexual behavior and negative well-being (e.g., Eisenberg, Ackard, Resnick, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009). This seems to be especially the case for longitudinal studies (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010; Owen et al., 2011). For instance, a longitudinal study on female freshmen who completed 13 monthly surveys found that hookup behavior was cross-sectional correlated with depression but could not predict future depression, thereby questioning the nature of this association (Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2014). In addition, Owen and colleagues (2011) showed that only young adults who hooked up and had positive emotional reactions after prior hookups were more likely to hookup in the future, whereas this was not the case for young adults who had negative emotional reactions after prior hookups.

Female emerging adults that participated in studies related to this dissertation were less likely to endorse positive attitudes towards casual sex (Study 2, Chapter 1) and less likely to report to use Tinder for sexual purposes (Chapter 3 and 4), but had higher odds of engagement in casual sex compared to male emerging adults. Therefore, one might wonder: if women really do not

experience any benefit from casual sex, why would they engage in it? Wade (2017) suggests that casual sex has given women the freedom to focus on their own lives and careers. As the findings in this dissertation are not informative regarding mental and physical consequences of engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships, as well as motives for engagement in casual sex, future research examining the potential relationship between casual sex and well-being, as well as motives to engage in casual sex would be fruitful in gaining a better understanding of casual sexual intimacy in Belgium.

Casual Sex not that Casual?

The findings from the in-depth interviews in Chapter 1 suggest that social media play a crucial role when navigating through casual sexual encounters and relationships. New technology is not only used to initiate contact with casual partners (e.g., Chapter 5), but also facilitates the pursuit of casual sexual relationships (Bergdall et al., 2012; Jonason, Li, & Cason, 2011). Imagine going back in time for two decades and having a casual sexual encounter with someone. Chances are high that, if you would not exchange phone numbers nor live close to each other, you would never see each other again. Today, even without exchanging phone numbers, you can easily search the internet for more information about your casual sexual partner and for example add him or her on Facebook. In the case of mobile dating applications, users often already have done their share to reduce uncertainty by browsing the social networking sites of the people they are about to meet in an offline encounter (e.g., Gibbs, Ellison, & Lai, 2011).

Moreover, it seems that social media such as Facebook both facilitate and complicate casual sexual relationships. Female participants, in particular, mentioned using Facebook to keep tabs on their casual sexual partners. Whereas Facebook jealousy and partner monitoring have received quite some attention within the context of committed relationships (e.g., Darvell, Walsh, & White, 2011; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009), the current literature does not dig deeper into experiences with jealousy and partner monitoring within the context of casual sexual relationships. Yet, findings from the interviews in Chapter 1 seem to suggest that people in casual sexual relationships do experience jealousy because of the information that is publicly displayed about their casual sexual partner. For instance, a female participant explained that it was clear from the information on Facebook that her casual sexual partner was publicly involved with other women as well, which made her cease the casual sexual relationship. An example of a male participant, on the other hand, illustrated how a one-night stand eventually evolved into a casual sexual relationship, because he and his casual sexual partner were friends on Facebook. The presence of social networking sites might thus complicate the casual sexual relationship in ways that have yet to be explored. In addition, as the latter example shows, social networking sites might encourage

people to also emotionally explore their casual sexual partners. Several studies have shown that casual sexual interactions within hookups or casual sexual relationships eventually result in committed relationships (e.g., Rhoades & Stanley, 2014; Wade, 2017). While the focus of the interviews in Chapter 1 was not centered on committed relationships that were a result of casual sex, it would be fruitful to examine 1) if casual sex also often precedes relationship formation among Flemish emerging adults and 2) if social media play a role in this shift from casual sex to a committed relationship. Furthermore, the presence of communication technologies might complicate moving on from casual sexual relationships. Just as people in committed relationships try to prevent a breakup through keeping in touch with their casual partners by using their mobile phones (e.g., Bergdall et al., 2012), the same might be happening in casual sexual relationships.

THE MEDIATIZATION OF INTIMACY

Dating practices generally involve planned social engagements that provide dating partners with the opportunity to get to know each other before any further commitments (Bailey, 1988). Within such dates, sexual expectations are generally restricted to passionately kissing (Mongeau, Serewicz, & Therrien, 2004). However, as noted previously, some researchers claim that hookups are starting to replace dating practices (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Stinson, Levy, & Alt, 2014), meaning that any form of commitment is now preceded by high levels of sexual interactions (Wade, 2017). Others argue that hookups precede, rather than replace, dating practices (e.g., England, Shafer, & Fogarty, 2008; Reid, Elliott, & Webber, 2011), meaning that highly scripted social engagements with limited sexual interactions might be a consequence of the hookup. Although hookups and dates can be intertwined, a date does not necessarily have to follow a hookup, which can explain why some researchers argue that hookup scripts and dating scripts coexist (e.g. Brimeyer & Smith, 2012), especially as both men and women generally report twice as many hookups compared to first dates (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

While this dissertation did not inquiry Flemish emerging adults about their experiences with dates, Chapter 1 does suggest that casual sex has also become a common practice for at least half of Flemish emerging adults. Yet, based on these findings it is not clear how exactly these casual sexual scripts function. For example, will these casual sexual practices eventually lead to a date or a committed relationship, which is often the case in U.S. studies? And are there any mental outcomes related to these casual sexual experiences? Such questions thus imply that much is still left to discover by future research examining changes in casual sexual intimacy. However, the focus of this dissertation is centered on the media and its potential influence on changes in casual sexual intimacy, as observed over the past years. According to Hepp (2013, p. 14), "changes in media do

not have a direct impact upon everyday life; rather this process of change alters informational networks, role relationships, and human group identities." Over the past decades, the media seems to have normalized casual sexual intimacy (e.g., Chapter 2). Explicit sexual portrayals continue to enter the privacy of the home, as they are frequently shown on popular U.S. television programs such as *Jersey Shore*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Family Guy*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Two and a Half Men* (Bond & Drogos, 2014). Garcia and colleagues even describe the popular reality show *Jersey Shore* as a television program "which ultimately 'glorified' hookups among strangers, acquaintances, and friends" (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012, p. 162). This has been going on for quite some years, as McNair in 2002 already stated that a 'revolution in the means of communication has fanned the growth of a less regulated, more commercialized sexual culture' (McNair, 2002, p. 12).

This brings us to the second part of this dissertation: how should we see mobile dating applications within the broader symbolic politics of media and intimacy? Just as researchers assumed that the college campus creates an environment for casual sexual intimacy, could it be that people are now creating their own temptation island through the use of mobile dating applications such as Tinder on their smartphones? How do users value different kinds of technological affordances related to mobile dating applications such as liking and swiping, as well as the algorithms organizing data and connection when looking for a romantic relationship or merely a sexual experience? In formulating an answer to these questions, we will distinguish between indirect and direct mediatization. As argued in the introduction, the narratives related to sexual intimacy as disseminated by U.S. television content are a form of indirect mediatization whereas the use of mobile dating applications is a form of direct mediatization. In addition, the algorithms used in mobile dating applications are a form of indirect mediatization, as users are generally not aware how these algorithms potentially determine their behaviors and they thus cannot use these algorithms to derive a certain outcome. While these algorithms were not empirically examined within this dissertation, it is necessary to pay some attention to these algorithms as well, as they may also (indirectly) influence changes in casual sexual intimacy.

Indirect Mediatization

A remarkable finding in the in-depth interviews in Chapter 1 is that all respondents used existing terms that presumably originated in the United States to describe their casual sexual experiences and relationships (e.g., one-night stands, friends with benefits, fuck buddies). As television often serves as a socializing factor in cultures, it could be that the dominant position of U.S. television might have globally influenced changes in (perceptions of) intimacy. For instance, emerging adults who generally grow up in a culture that judges premarital sexual activity are starting

to endorse more positive attitudes towards casual sex (e.g., Nepal; Regmi, van Teijlingen, Simkhada, & Acharya, 2011) and report more casual sexual behavior (e.g., China; Ma et al., 2006). According to Regmi and colleagues (2011), factors that influence such cultural shifts are exposure to global television and radio networks, movies, and the modernization of society and culture.

However, as "the media industry is undergoing a shift from creating content to providing platforms for user-driven social media interactions and user-generated content" (Schäfer, 2011, p. 12), attributing global changes in casual sexual attitudes and behaviors to U.S. television content would be too simplistic, and the emergence of social networking sites, as well as the increased access to sexually explicit material (e.g., pornography), have certainly also contributed to these changes. Notably, all around the world (even in less developed countries such as Nepal; Regmi et al., 2011), more and more people are starting to use mobile phones in their search for (casual) partners. These users might not always be aware that they are being subjected to agencies that have developed new technologies for capitalist purposes. To illustrate the implications of these new technologies, the potential influence of algorithms on casual sexual intimacy will be shortly explained.

Popular U.S. Television Shows as Global Storytellers

When comparing messages about sex on Israeli television with U.S. content, U.S. shows include significantly more sexual conversations, sexual behaviors, and sexual messages, compared to local programs (Eyal, Raz, & Levi, 2014). Similar findings emerged in China. While the Chinese government is very strict about the explicitness in televised portrayals of sexual intercourse and most sexual scenes occur between married partners, Chinese emerging adults are also frequently exposed to television content produced in the U.S., which portrays sexual behaviors that are deviant from the ones shown in Chinese content (Brown et al., 2013). As these studies often portray more explicit portrayals of (casual) sexual behavior (e.g., Kunkel, Eyal, Donnerstein, Biely, & Rideout, 2007; Chapter 2) and television content is an important socializer regarding sexual behavior given that Chinese emerging adults often are shy about discussing sexual topics with others, Brown and colleagues (2013) worry about the effects of U.S. television shows on Chinese emerging adults. However, being exposed to shows with considerably more sexual content is not necessarily a bad thing, as these shows generally account for more sexual risks and responsibilities than other shows (Jensen & Jensen, 2007), which might be necessary for cultures that shy away from sexual conversations. In addition, portrayals of (referenced) casual sexual behaviors provide its viewers with a vocabulary to discuss these topics, which could explain why emerging adults in Chapter 1 used English terms to describe experiences with casual sexual behavior.

Therefore, it was deemed necessary to gain a better understanding of how exactly casual sexual behaviors are repeatedly shown in U.S. television shows, as these shows seem to function as global storytellers. The results of the content analysis conducted in Chapter 2 suggest that casual sexual behaviors are almost as frequently shown in popular television programs as sexual behaviors within more traditional committed relationships. Interestingly, sexual behaviors within a committed relationship or date were mainly limited to passionate kissing, whereas sexual behavior within a casual sexual context consisted mostly of explicit portrayals of sexual intercourse. Moreover, it is not surprising that casual sex is not limited to the college campus (Chapter 1), given that the casual sexual scripts on the screen are not restricted to the college campus either. In fact, in televised portrayals of casual sex, it is mainly adults of ages 25 and older that engage in casual sex (Chapter 2), which is in line with our findings in Chapter 1, in which the odds to engage in casual sex also increased with age.

Importantly, this content analysis does not allow us to make any causal interference regarding actual casual sexual behavior. Yet, it certainly paves the way for media effects studies to examine how exactly exposure to the analyzed shows might influence perceptions of or engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships. Another limitation to note is that television is not the only source of information related to casual sex. For instance, casual sex is a common topic of conversation between emerging adults (Holman & Sillars, 2012), casual sexual narratives are frequently discussed in magazines (Aubrey & Smith, 2016; Joshi, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2014), and public displays of sexual references often occur on social networking sites (Moreno, Park, Zimmerman, Brito, & Christakis, 2009). Additionally, a growing body of research has examined how pornography use is related to an increased engagement in casual sexual relationships (e.g., Braithwaite, Aaron, Dowdle, Spjut, & Fincham, 2015) and willingness to engage in casual sex (e.g., van Oosten, Peter, & Vandenbosch, 2017). Nonetheless, the aforementioned studies even more so stress the need for a mediatization framework when studying changes in casual sexual intimacy, as casual sexual narratives seem to be omnipresent in the media environment.

Algorithms in a Time of Digitalization

Whereas online dating websites often have algorithms based on personality characteristics and mating preferences (Finkel et al., 2012), mobile dating applications are usually thought of as matching devices that match based on the users' account settings such as age, sex, and distance preferences. Yet, a small experiment in the study by David and Cambre (2016, p. 5) seems to suggest otherwise. During an interview, both interviewer and interviewee would check whether they had the same number of profiles presented to them when setting up the same parameters of

sex, age, and distance on their Tinder accounts. Apparently, the algorithm initially favored proposing candidates with whom one had a common link (which was possible because of Tinder's connection to the Facebook accounts of users). In addition, the authors assume that the frequency of use and the quantity of propositions might be inversely proportional, meaning that the algorithm decreases the number of viewable profiles as the frequency of use increases.

Therefore, it is important to realize that these new media are not a neutral means, as they are "produced, modified, and developed by industry for capitalist purposes" (Krotz, 2009, p. 25). In fact, "a platform's architecture – its interface design, code, algorithms – is always the temporary outcome of its owner's attempt to steer users' activities in a certain direction" (van Dijck, 2013, p. 144). In Chapter 5, we already briefly mentioned that mobile dating applications usually have a freemium business model, which means that the software is offered free of charge, but its features are designed in such a way that users are tempted to use the premium features of such applications for which they will be charged (e.g., Tinder Plus). For instance, while Tinder users used to have an unlimited amount of available swipes, the developers later limited this to only 100 right (positive) swipes per twelve hours (Chatel, 2016), to encourage users to start paying for more swipes.

As Tinder barely provides any information on the algorithms the application uses for the matching process, it is quite difficult to imagine its influence on users. However, there are some bits of information that reveal parts of the used algorithms. In a recent interview with Fast Company, for instance, CEO Sean Read confirmed that Tinder uses an algorithm that calculates an "Elo score" which is basically a score of desirability attributed to the user. According to Sean Read, this desirability measure is based on more than just the profile photo, meaning that it is not merely an attractiveness measure. Yet, it is not exactly clear which other variables are considered within this desirability algorithm aside from users' self-presentations on the profile (Carr, 2016). Nonetheless, the Elo score implies that users generally will only be able to swipe other users that belong to the same Elo category instead of all available users within the vicinity.

Cho and Roy (2004) argue that in the context of algorithms based on popularity ranking, popular content is what is most frequently and prominently recommended, thus further enhancing its popularity relative to other available content, and inhibiting less popular content from gaining popularity. Applied to Tinder, this means that users with high Elo scores will have more choices and will continue being rated as popular Tinder profiles, whereas users with low Elo scores will likely have less interesting choices presented to them and also have fewer possibilities to increase their Elo scores, thereby remaining less popular profiles. As users with high Elo scores will receive more interesting profiles, they will probably be less interested in pursuing the premium version of Tinder, as they already experience the benefits of the free version. Contrarily, users with low Elo

scores will benefit from the premium version of Tinder, as it will increase their available and more attractive options by including users with high Elo scores. Thus, when applying the logic of Cho and Roy (2004) to the Tinder algorithm, it does not seem as innocent as presented by the CEO of Tinder in the interview with Carr (2016).

In addition, the logic behind the idea of online dating is that users aim to project an identity that is desirable for people they do not know yet and wish to attract (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). Once users become aware of this desirability algorithm, it might influence their self-presentation on Tinder. Given the visual dominance affordance of Tinder, users strongly rely on visual self-presentation (David & Cambre, 2016; Chan, 2017) and might focus mainly on presenting the self through the use of profile pictures. Consequently, it could be possible that women would engage more in sexual self-presentation in their profile pictures to increase their likeability. This could have problematic consequences, as a study on social networking sites (SNS) showed that sexual references on SNS lead to men's increased sexual expectations and decreased romantic interest after exposure to displays of sexual references on women's SNS profiles (Moreno, Swanson, Royer, & Roberts, 2011).

The aforementioned example perfectly illustrates van Dijck's reasoning that "it is easier to encode sociality into algorithms than to decode algorithms back into social action" (van Dijck, 2013, p. 172). Tinder has taken several actions to prove the application is not just "a hookup app" but enables loving romantic relationships and friendships (e.g., Mills, 2015). According to Napoli (2014) one of the deeper cultural and social implications of the embedding of algorithms in everyday life is that whenever we use a data-based tool, it is already using us. Being rather secretive about their use of algorithms and by giving users the perception that the swiping process is only based on age, sex, and distance preferences, Tinder might mislead their users as they are often not aware of the algorithms used in the application and the consequences the use of such algorithms holds as briefly explained in this section. Moreover, the use of algorithms in mobile dating applications, might not only be of interest to users of those apps but also to researchers examining the use and consequences of those applications. Although the study of algorithms is not simple, as the designers easily and frequently change the codes in these algorithms (e.g., Google's search algorithms are adjusted 500-600 times per year; MOZ, 2013), it is certainly an avenue for future research related to Tinder and other mobile dating applications.

Direct Mediatization Through Mobile Dating Applications

When studying courtship patterns in the information age, Swertz (2012) concludes that online dating technologies solve a problem they themselves created. He argues that computer technology eventually induces new courtship patterns which affect responsibility and courtesy in

courtship behavior. The decreased courtesy in (online) relationships, in turn, increases the readiness to leave one's partner. When more and more people leave their partner, there will be also more people who start using online dating websites to find a new partner. Similarly, Bauman (2003) argues online dating has transformed modern courtship into a type of entertainment where dating has become a recreational activity. A media theory that resonates with such rationalizing is technological determinism. Slack and Wise (2005, p. 43) summarize technological determinism as the "belief that the technical base of a society is the fundamental condition affecting all patterns of social existence… and technological change is the single most important source of change in society." From this perspective, the relationship between new technology and society is a linear one of cause and effect.

However, such stance on mobile dating applications does not take into account that: 1) not everyone uses this new technology for the same reason (e.g., Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Chapter 3), and 2) not everyone derives the same experiences from the technology (e.g., Hobbs, Owen, & Gerber, 2017). From a mediatization perspective, the communicational practices associated with the media depend on how people understand a medium based on their own position in their culture and society (Krotz, 2009). In a similar vein, people's motives for using mobile dating applications might be related to how they understand this medium or the meaning they give to this new medium, as they play a seminal and purposeful role in fashioning and using mobile dating applications (e.g., Campbell & Ruso, 2003). Based on findings from Chapters 3 to 5, we propose that instead of referring to mobile dating applications as "mobile dating" applications, it might be more suitable to refer to them as "screening/meeting" applications. In addition, the outcomes that are generally related to Tinder use will be discussed to explain if and how mobile dating applications could have contributed to changes in casual sexual intimacy.

Screening/Meeting Applications that are Constantly Changing

The main purpose of Chapter 3 was to qualitatively and quantitatively examine motives for using Tinder. The Tinder Motives Scale (TMS) developed in Chapter 3 was then further validated in Chapter 4, by examining how personality traits are related to Tinder motives. Understanding Tinder motives is a necessary starting point for related research questions such as those concerning positive or negative effects of using these new technologies. The findings derived from Chapter 3 show that Tinder is not exclusively used in the quest for relational nor sexual intimacy, which is in line with other studies related to Tinder motives (e.g., Hobbs et al., 2017; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Ward, 2016a). Consequently, referring to Tinder as a "mobile dating application" or a "hookup application" does certainly not capture the whole picture. Instead, we would like to propose to

describe Tinder (and similar applications) as a "screening/meeting application[13]", especially as such description encompasses both the active and passive components of the 13 Tinder motives found in Chapter 3.

As mentioned in the introduction, several affordances differentiate mobile dating applications from online dating websites. Some of these affordances could elicit passive-oriented Tinder motives. Due to the mobility affordance, for instance, people can now access their Tinder profiles wherever they are. Users are curious about what such applications are about and who else is on Tinder (i.e., curiosity motive). Users also acknowledge the entertainment function of the application (i.e., pass time/entertainment motive), thereby making it a social gathering, not as much with other users on the application but with their friends. In addition, the visual dominance of the applications makes it the ideal tool for self-presentation, as discussed in the section on algorithms. Consequently, a decent amount of Tinder users admits to be merely looking for affirmation on Tinder (i.e., social approval motive). Getting matches is one way to receive this affirmation. In Chapter 4, it is argued that Tinder – or mobile dating applications in general – have become part of single emerging adults' day-to-day single life. Consequently, using Tinder out of peer pressure or because everyone else is using it are also part of the passive component. These passive components generally have in common that they are not associated with offline encounters.

However, Tinder also entails an active component, as a decent amount of Tinder users mentioned they would use the application to find friends, romantic and/or sexual partners, people with a similar sexual orientation, and travel buddies. Indeed, these active motives were significantly and positively correlated with a higher number of reported offline encounters with other Tinder users in Chapter 3. Chapters 3 and 5 further stress the importance of focusing on motives rather than (frequency of) use when studying Tinder outcomes, as the relationship seeking Tinder motive was significantly associated with the reported numbers of romantic partners met on the app, the casual sexual motive was significantly associated with reporting both a higher number of sexual hookups and casual sexual relationships, and the socializing motive was significantly associated with a higher number of friends met through the application. These examples of the active component of Tinder motives are generally facilitated by the proximity and immediacy affordances.

Personality also seems to determine in part which kind of people are mostly attracted to which kind of affordances offered by Tinder. Individuals with high scores on neuroticism, for

[13] For the readability of this dissertation, we will continue to refer to these applications as mobile dating applications to avoid confusion for the reader.

example, are more likely to use the application to obtain social approval, thereby being attracted to the visual dominance affordance of Tinder. Another example is the synchronicity affordance, which implies high levels of activity and involvement. Introverted individuals, for instance, were more likely to use Tinder to improve their flirting and social skills. The computer-mediated communication afforded by Tinder is less of a threshold to talk to strangers, but due to its synchronicity affordance requires witty and fast interactions. However, Marcus (2016) argues that the synchronicity affordance could also lead to distraction from "real life", which is in line with the distraction motive found in Chapter 3. Users also mentioned to use Tinder while traveling, which is even more likely the case for users with high scores on openness to experience. Since 2014, the paid passport feature on Tinder allows users to swipe on any location in the world, which is often marketed as the ideal tool for men who travel a lot to meet (and have sex with) women all over the world (e.g., Masculine Profiles, 2016).

Manovich (2009) argues that the social media companies' strategies are now focused on flexibility and constant change. Their use of software allows them to quickly test and make changes to their applications. This is perfectly illustrated by the application's introduction of Tinder Social (Tinder, 2016a). Users are most likely to indicate they are using Tinder to broaden their social network and make new friends (e.g., Chapter 3). Clearly, Tinder has come to the same conclusion, as this extra feature allows users to decide whether they want to swipe as a single user or as a group of friends who is looking for one or more other friends (see **Figure 7**). Notably, the findings from this dissertation are all based on – and thus limited to – the individual use of Tinder. Yet, stories on the internet seem to suggest that the social feature is not that successful in bringing groups together (e.g., Payton, 2016) and has a strong sexual focus (e.g., Tierney, 2016). However, as public discourses surrounding Tinder are not always reliable, nor telling of the whole story, future research is necessary to examine the use and motives of Tinder social and its outcomes.

When studying mobile dating applications, it is important to acknowledge that these technologies are constantly changing, as already mentioned in the introduction. Tinder has hired a sociologist (Jessica Carbino), who is constantly in dialogue with users to understand and eventually improve their experiences (Earthy, 2017). The findings from studies conducted by Jessica Carbino often are an inspiration for developing new features, such as the pay feature of Smart Photos (Hall, 2016). Moreover, the application might not be solely focusing on its proximity and mobility affordances, as the company is about to launch an online version of the application that can be accessed through personal computers (Tinder, 2017). In addition, Tinder has been exploring possibilities that go far beyond the dating experience, such as conducting political polls. In November 2016, users in countries all over the world could swipe on the U.S. presidential election

and Tinder claimed this resulted in "one of the largest global polls of millennials in history" (Tinder, 2016b). While we argue now that Tinder should be referred to as a "screening/meeting application", the changes it might create within its own software might indicate that in the (near) future, another term would even be more suitable.

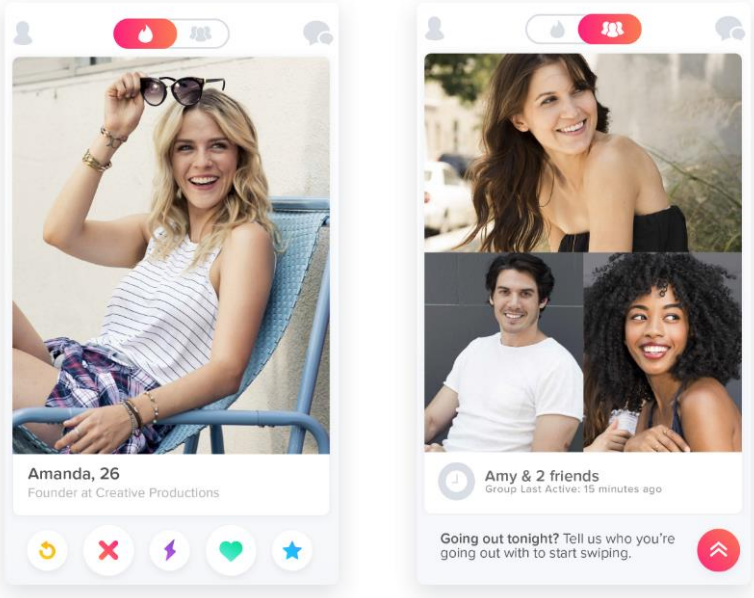

Figure 7. *Illustrating the difference between Tinder single (left picture) and Tinder social (right picture) (Tinder, 2016a).*

Does Tinder Facilitate Casual Sex?

While it is not clear how exactly mobile dating applications influence the increase of casual sex (e.g., Choi et al., 2016), it has received some research attention. In her book "American Hookup", Wade (2017) briefly touches upon dating applications' relation to hookups. She describes how a girl hooks up with a guy she met on Tinder. In the second story, a male student who identified himself as being homosexual felt bad about being a virgin and used dating apps with the purpose of losing his virginity and find other gay men to hook up with. In the book *Modern Romance*, Aziz Ansari teamed up with sociologist Eric Klinenberg to examine the role of technology within the quest for love. Tinder has received quite some media attention and the authors note how attitudes towards Tinder have changed over the years. At first, in 2013, participants in their focus groups said they would just use it for fun, although serious users were mostly interested in using Tinder as a hookup app for casual sex. People would be rather embarrassed if they would actually meet a potential partner on an app like Tinder. However,

towards the start of 2015, more and more people started to use Tinder for dating purposes and online dating sites quickly started to design their own mobile dating app versions (Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015). These findings are in line with those of the Pew Research Center, in which Smith and Anderson (2016) show that mobile dating applications are reducing stigma towards online dating practices, especially for emerging adults.

In the introduction, it was argued that cultural conventions surrounding an object indirectly influence affordances related to the object. The main cultural convention surrounding Tinder is that the application is merely used as a hookup application (e.g., Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015; David & Cambre, 2016; Duguay 2017; Mason, 2016; Sales, 2015). In Chapter 5, the sexual Tinder motive was a significant predictor of engagement in both one-night stands and casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users, suggesting that these cultural conventions influenced the use of Tinder as a tool that facilitates sexual encounters for those who are looking for it. However, not reporting this motive does not necessarily mean that such a sexual outcome will be absent. The travel motive, for instance, was also associated with an increase in sexual outcomes (Chapter 3).

In fact, despite that motives such as making new friends or finding a romantic partner on Tinder are highly ranked compared to the sexual Tinder motive (Chapter 3), users appear to be more likely to have experienced casual sex derived from using the application compared to forming a committed relationship (Chapter 5). Similarly, in Chapter 3, users were more likely to report one-time-only sexual interactions with other users compared to committed relationships. Interestingly, male Tinder users were significantly more likely to report using Tinder to have casual sex compared to female Tinder users (Chapter 3, Chapter 4). Yet, Chapter 5 showed that the sexes did not differ in reported one-time-only sexual encounters, but instead women were more likely to report a higher number of casual sexual relationships with other Tinder users than men. Contrarily, personality does not seem to highly influence using Tinder to increase sexual experience, as only agreeableness was significantly and negatively associated with using Tinder for sexual purposes, meaning that those with low scores on agreeableness were more likely to use Tinder to find casual sexual partners (Chapter 4).

In an article Rachel Sanoff (2016) wrote for Bustle, she argues that maybe users are afraid of being judged when they admit that they are on mobile dating applications for casual sexual interactions. Such reasoning resonates with findings in Chapter 1 (study 2), in which male participants were also more likely to report positive attitudes towards casual sex compared to female participants, yet no differences regarding their reported behavior emerged. It could thus be that female Tinder users are less likely to admit that they are on Tinder for casual sex, because they feel they will be judged more harshly when they do so (cf., new sexual double standard). Sanoff

(2016) further quotes an interview with Kathleen Bogle, who has done an extensive amount of academic work related to the hookup culture, in which Bogle argues that "many college students are not very clear about what they want in terms of sexual or romantic relationships. […] My guess is that when college students use Tinder, they don't know exactly what they want — or what they'll find. So, they may say on surveys that they are open to many different possibilities, including just making some new friends (who they may or may not actually hook up with)." Just as Bogle (2008) and Wade (2017) argued that the college campus created a space that facilitated casual sexual behavior (e.g., easy access to alcohol, no parental control), it might be that mobile dating applications are even further facilitating casual sex, as it is no longer required to go out and party to find a potential sexual partner. Instead, users can now swipe on their couches or when they are with their friends and meet up with others whenever is most convenient for them (see also the in-depth interviews in Chapter 3). Moreover, whereas their options would be limited to the one person they are spending time with in real life, they can simultaneously have different conversations with different other people on mobile dating applications, thereby creating opportunities for casual sexual experiences that are not necessarily time-consuming.

In Chapter 5, those using Tinder for more than 12 months had an increased chance to have both offline encounters and casual sexual relationships with other users. From a U&G perspective, it is likely to assume that those using the app for 12 months are able to satisfy their needs through the use of the app, thereby continuing to use Tinder (Ruggiero, 2000). However, an alternative explanation would be that users who had the application for longer than 12 months increased their chances of meeting someone on the app and indirectly also their chances of having a sexual encounter. From both perspectives, it might be plausible to assume that apps such as Tinder indeed enable engagement in casual sex. This can also explain why Choi and colleagues (2016) found that, compared to non-users, those using dating apps for more than 12 months were more likely to report a casual sexual partner in their last sexual intercourse experience. Moreover, as I argued in Chapter 5, the agencies behind the development of mobile dating technologies will rather support this casual sexual script, as it will redirect users to their services seen the impermanence of casual sexual encounters.

In an ethnographic study on the experiences of homosexual users with the mobile dating apps Grindr and Tinder, MacKee (2016) argues that homosexual users generally perceive Tinder as less of a hookup application, especially when comparing it to Grindr and other gay-oriented mobile dating apps. One of the main arguments to argue that Tinder is less of a hookup platform is tied to its authenticity affordance. Due to its connection to Facebook and other third-party platforms (e.g., Instagram, Spotify), verifiability becomes compulsory and users can less freely

modify their representation directly (and independently from Facebook) on Tinder (Duguay, 2017; MacKee, 2016). Consequently, profile pictures are mostly based on pictures directly imported from Facebook, meaning they constitute of messages that are generally desexualized, as they come from a more open and exposed digital environment (i.e., Facebook). In case users spot fake profiles, Tinder allows them to report those profiles as spam. Additionally, the Tinder chat function does not allow users to exchange personal pictures during a private messaging conversation (MacKee, 2016). Contrarily, conversations on Grindr are usually accompanied by the exchange of naked pictures (MacKee, 2016; Race, 2015). However, this does not mean that Tinder users will not exchange sexualized pictures. After the matching process on Tinder, users generally move to other technological platforms such as Facebook or Whatsapp (Ward, 2016b) where they can privately exchange (sexually explicit) pictures. Even if sexually explicit pictures are not exchanged on Tinder, Instagram accounts such as "Tinder Nightmares" show that sexually explicit messages also can occur on Tinder. However, if Tinder users have inappropriate photos or send inappropriate messages, they can be reported as well and their accounts will be blocked. Another important feature that distinguishes Tinder from Grindr is the matching process on Tinder. Whereas users can contact anyone within a certain distance on Grindr, the swiping process on Tinder remains unanimous until both users right swipe (like) each other, meaning that the design of Tinder is more strongly focused on dynamics of mutual attraction and consent, rather than solely the geolocative affordances (MacKee, 2016).

Just as MacKee (2016) found that homosexual users were more likely to look for committed relationships on Tinder compared to Grindr, Chapters 3 and 5 showed that Tinder meetings do not only generate casual sexual encounters but are also associated with a higher number of committed relationships with other Tinder users. While it has often been assumed that mobile dating applications are used to expand sexual networks (e.g., Choi et al., 2016), both qualitative (e.g., Hobbs et al., 2017; Ward, 2016a) and quantitative (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Chapter 3) studies suggest that many individuals use these new technologies to pursue meaningful relationships. Whereas some argue that the endless possibilities of mobile and online dating practices lead to phenomena such as "relationshopping" (Heino, Ellison, & Gibbs, 2010) and the gamification of dating practices (Bauman, 2003), those using mobile dating apps argue that the increased access to more romantic and relationships possibilities is helpful in finding a compatible partner (Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015; Hobbs et al., 2017).

While the findings derived from this dissertation provide some evidence to assume that mobile dating applications indeed contribute to changes in casual sexual intimacy, they also seem to promote the establishment of committed relationships. Hjarvard (2013, p. 5) warns that we

should be careful not to confuse the perpetual and highly visible "newness" of media developments with a continuous transformation of all social and cultural arrangements." Clearly, studies related to casual sexual behavior have found a shift from dating behaviors to hookup behaviors even long before mobile dating applications existed (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Paul et al., 2000). Consequently, mobile dating applications are not the cause of changes in casual sexual intimacy, but they do, however, create possibilities to obtain casual sex, for those who want it.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As with all research, it is important to consider limitations when interpreting the findings from this dissertation. Foremost, relying on cross-sectional survey research, it is impossible to establish causal claims. Other often cited limitations related to this type of research is that it relied on single respondents' self-report (e.g., Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 – 5), thereby increasing particular response patterns and/or biases. Yet, we attempted to minimalize such occurrences in Chapter 3 and 4 by using instructed response items (Meade & Craig, 2012). In addition, we would like to address two major limitations specifically that might have influenced findings throughout this dissertation, starting with the participants and sampling method. Second, we argue that cultural differences are important to consider both in understanding casual sexual experiences and relationships and technology use. Throughout this discussion, we already considered several implications for future research related to Flemish emerging adults' engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships (e.g., mental and physical outcomes), media narratives (e.g., magazines) and examining mobile dating applications (e.g., constantly changing features and algorithms of Tinder). Yet, in terms of future directions, we would like to center the focus on online interactions initiated on mobile dating applications before finalizing this dissertation.

Participants and Sampling Method

The samples surveyed in this dissertation consisted mainly of Flemish emerging adults. These findings may not necessarily translate to emerging adults in other cultures or to other age groups. The Pew Research Centers showed that not only has emerging adults' use of online dating increased with the advent of mobile dating apps, but also seniors (those aged 65+) are increasingly likely to use online dating platforms in contemporary society (Smith & Anderson, 2016). When developing the TMS in Chapter 3, the oldest Tinder user in study 2 was 67 years old and the oldest Tinder user in study 4 was 69 years old, suggesting that also in Belgium, the use of mobile dating apps is not limited to emerging adults. However, since the focus has remained on emerging adults in this and previous research, less is known about this older cohort. Within the context of online

dating sites, Whyte and Torgler (2017) also note that less attention has been given to the psychology and behavior of senior online daters. Yet, romantic relationships in later life are increasingly common and some patterns appear to persist through the life-span, such as men desiring women increasingly younger than themselves and women desiring men older than themselves (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2009). Consequently, it would be fruitful to gather more information about older age groups related to their experiences with mobile dating applications and what consequences this might hold for their attitudes towards and behavior in casual sex.

Regarding the sampling method, we mainly relied on "Facebook snowball sampling" when collecting participants for the studies conducted in this dissertation. Generally, a "snowball method" can have epistemological limitations regarding generating statistically significant representative samples. Yet, this sampling method has often been found to be economical, efficient and effective in various studies (e.g., Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Bhutta, 2012; Kosinski, Matz, & Gosling, 2015). In addition, Atkinson and Flint (2003) argue that bias can be reduced through the generation of large sample sizes, which we tried to do in several of the studies in this dissertation by generating samples of over 1,000 participants (e.g., Study 3 of Chapter 1; Study 2 and 4 of Chapter 3; Chapter 5). As Facebook sampling is creating an economical, efficient and effective way of collecting data, researchers have examined its pros and cons as a research tool (e.g., Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Bhutta, 2012; Kosinski et al., 2015) and generally concluded that Facebook offers an efficient way to collect self-reported data of good quality. Nonetheless, it might be possible that representative samples of singles in emerging adulthood might result in findings that are contrasting with some of our arguments. For instance, in Chapter 4, we argue that mobile dating applications have become part of day-to-day single life for emerging adults. Yet, it could be possible that a more representative sample would consist of more emerging adults without mobile dating app experience, thereby challenging findings of Chapter 4.

Cultural Differences

While on a research stay at Purdue University during the 2014-2015 academic year, I participated in Dr. Steve Wilson's family communication class. One day we discussed that in several studies conducted in the U.S., researchers found that cohabitation before marriage is associated with an increased risk of divorce later on (e.g., Axinn & Thornton, 1992). In several of these studies, cohabitation was perceived as a way to delay commitment. I was confused by these findings and certainly doubted them. I tried to convince my peers in class that this was certainly not the case in Belgium. In my perception, cohabitation was a necessary step before even considering marriage. Later on, I read that in Germany, for instance, cohabitation before marriage is associated with a slightly *lower* risk of divorce down the line (Kiernan, 1999). Kiernan explains

this findings by arguing that in the U.S. people are more disapproving towards unmarried sex compared to people in Western European countries. Consequently, it could be that Americans who decide to live together before marriage are already more open to nontraditional arrangements, including divorce, than the general population.

While the aforementioned arguments are based on studies that were conducted in the 90s, it is a perfect illustration of how careful we should be about generalizing findings from one culture to another. Within this dissertation, a large part of the arguments is built on findings that emerged from research conducted in the United States. Yet, when studying casual sexual encounters and relationships, it is important to consider cultural differences between the cultures that have examined casual sexual intimacy. Based on findings from Chapter 1, for instance, we can argue that the campus culture in U.S. universities probably has a bigger impact on the occurrence of casual sex compared to the campus culture in Belgian universities. Compared to Belgian universities, it is very expensive to go to college in the U.S. and U.S. universities often use a lot of propaganda to attract fee-paying undergraduate students. According to Wade (2017), one of these propaganda tactics is to portray college as a place where young people have fun. Wade also remarks that college students in the U.S. often share a room with another student. This way, roommates sometimes witness each other's hookups, which might further influence descriptive and injunctive norms. Contrarily, Belgian students often have their own private room, which also aids them in keeping their casual sexual encounters more private if they want to. Additionally, it is very difficult for U.S. students under the age of 21 to get access to alcohol and the college environment creates more opportunities for under-aged students to get drunk, thereby also facilitating hooking up (Fielder & Carey, 2010). Contrarily, in Belgium, anyone above the age of 16 is allowed to consume alcohol. While alcohol was also often mentioned as a facilitator of casual sexual experiences (see Study 1 in Chapter 1), college is not the first time for Belgian students to experience an increased access to alcohol. Therefore, an avenue for future research within a Belgian context would be to examine adolescents' experiences with casual sex.

Another example is related to the content analysis conducted in Chapter 2. While this content analysis was necessary in terms of global messages related to casual sexual intimacy disseminated by American culture, it is important to acknowledge that these other cultures also have their own cultural messages that might in some cases contradict the ones disseminated through American content. For instance, when studying portrayals of the hookup culture in U.S. magazines and Dutch magazines, Joshi and colleagues (2014) found that U.S. magazines more often focused on casual sex whereas Dutch magazines were more likely to focus on committed sex. Similarly, Brown and colleagues (2013) found that in Chinese television content, sexual

intercourse was implied or depicted in fewer than 2% of the romantic scenes and whenever sexual behavior was shown on the screen it was almost exclusively within the context of a committed relationship. This is in stark contrast with findings in content analyses that examined television content produced in the U.S. (e.g., Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005; Chapter 2). Consequently, in terms of media effect studies, it might be valuable to examine portrayals of casual sexual intimacy in Flemish media as well, as those findings will be helpful in understanding (non)findings in media effect studies.

Finally, cultural differences also need to be considered when studying Tinder. While Chapter 3 also included input from U.S. college students (Study 1), input from Flemish Tinder users (Study 2) resulted in five additional Tinder motives. Consequently, it could be possible that users in other countries have different motives that are not explored yet within this dissertation. Additionally, it is plausible to assume that other countries might also differ in the order of Tinder motives. For example, whereas the sexual Tinder motive did not receive a high score for the average Belgian Tinder user, it could be that U.S. Tinder users score higher on this Tinder motive and lower on other motives such as curiosity.

Online Interactions on the Individual Level

While the focus throughout this dissertation was mainly on setting the stage for the mediatization of casual sexual intimacy, attention should also be paid to the unique form of mediated communication between two strangers who happen to be in each other's co-presence that is being facilitated through mobile dating applications. So far, the online interpersonal process (or computer-mediated communication, CMC) occurring between two individuals after they match, has not received much research attention. Substantial theories exist that explain relationship development through CMC (e.g., Social Information Processing; Walther, 1992). However, several affordances, such as the use of GPS to minimize the time between an online and offline encounter, distinguish mobile dating apps from their predecessors (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017). The mobility, proximity, and immediacy affordances draw attention to interaction continuation rather than online relationship development, as the use of mobile dating applications requires spontaneity, availability, and fast responses (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017; Marcus, 2016).

A study in the UK found that only a small proportion of matches between users actually lead to an offline encounter (Tyson, Perta, Haddadi, & Seto, 2016), which is in line with findings in Chapter 5, in which less than half of participants had experienced a face-to-face meeting. Such findings suggest that online interactions on mobile dating apps like Tinder are often not that successful, which points to the importance of studying online interactions. For future research, it is worthwhile to gain more information on the online interpersonal process in order to help users

have successful interactions on mobile dating apps. This is especially true because online dating has become the most prevalent way to meet potential partners in contemporary society (Finkel et al., 2012) and attract a wide range of users, including emerging adults and older adults (Smith & Anderson, 2016). Similar in Flanders, online dating appears to be the third most cited way to find a romantic relationship (Sokol & Coen, 2016).

Whereas media theories rarely pay attention to interpersonal communication processes within media use, interpersonal communication theories are often not adapted to CMC contexts. One such theoretical framework of the latter is the Expectancy Violations Theory, initially developed by Burgoon (1978; 1993). Expectancy Violations Theory proposes that expectancies are a framework through which people determine which behavior is acceptable and unacceptable. In the case of mobile dating apps, this behavior is the online communication with another user. These expectancies "entail both a predictive (i.e., what we anticipate will occur) and a prescriptive component (i.e., what is desired or preferred)" (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005, p. 151). When another person violates these expectancies, this behavior must be interpreted and evaluated. This evaluation is described as the *valence of violation* and refers to the positive or negative meaning we assign to the violation (Burgoon, 1993). A positive valence will typically lead to better interaction outcomes than a non-violation, whereas a negative valence will typically lead to worse interaction outcomes than simply meeting expectations (Afifi & Metts, 1998). In other words, if a negative violation occurs for at least one of the users interacting on a dating app, the interaction is likely to end. If a positive violation occurs, then it might be more likely that the conversation will continue and the relationship could develop (either online or offline).

According to Expectancy Violations Theory, expectancies are generally influenced by three key factors: (1) the *characteristics* of individual communicators (e.g., sociodemographics or personality) that carry associated anticipations about how such people will communicate, (2) *relationship factors* between communicators (e.g., degree of familiarity or attraction), and (3) *context characteristics* that include environmental constraints and definitions of the situation. When applied to CMC, researchers suggest that Expectancy Violations Theory may operate differently (McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012) and specific factors related to the medium of interest also influence expectancies. For instance, in a study on expectancies related to being unfriended on Facebook, researchers found Facebook involvement influenced expectancy violations (Bevan, Ang, & Fearns, 2014). In the context of mobile dating apps, a specific factor that potentially guides a user's expectancies towards what is *preferred* or *desired* (i.e., the prescriptive component of expectancies; Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005), is the primary motive to use a dating app.

The motives for using mobile dating apps such as Tinder unraveled in Chapter 3 are thus useful in exploring expectancy violations in online interactions on mobile dating apps. Tying motives generated from a media theory (i.e., Uses and Gratifications Theory) to an interpersonal communication theory (i.e., Expectancy Violations Theory) will be helpful in gaining a better understanding as to why users' motives are not always congruent their actual outcomes (e.g., Bhattacharya, 2015; Chapter 5) and why trolling behaviors often occur on mobile dating apps (March, Grieve, Marrington, & Jonason, 2017). Moreover, implementing the findings derived from this dissertation in theories of interpersonal communication will be useful in developing a guide on being successful on mobile dating applications targeted at users of such applications.

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SUMMARY

Due to large societal changes, such as the detrimental increase in divorce rates and the increase in partner choice, young adults have become cautious about commitment. As more and more people become aware that relationships do not last forever, they are more likely to invest in themselves and quit relationships that no longer offer mutual satisfaction or personal growth. Casual sex gives young adults the opportunity to connect with and fully explore potential partners, resulting in contemporary dating practices that generally involve a high amount of sexual activitiy between dating partners before they move on to any form of commitment or exclusivity. Additionally, many aspects of people's sexual lives in Western cultures are now mediated, meaning they are made into symbolic content by using technological and institutional tools for communication. Consequently, some researchers have argued that the visibility of media representations of sex and new technology that enable new forms of sexual encounters are partly responsible for changing the committed nature of intimacy to a more casual one.

By applying the theoretical framework of mediatization, this dissertation aimed to unravel the association between new media and casual sexual intimacy on a micro-level, while at the same time being aware of changes in media, as well as cultural and societal changes that might have possibly contributed to changes in casual sexual intimacy. Put differently, the mediatization of emerging adults' casual sexual intimacies explores the role of televisivion content produced in the United States (U.S.) and mobile dating apps in processes of social and cultural change, in which mediatization is equally important and related to other meta-processes that have contributed to an increase in casual sexual encounters and relationships, such as the individualization and democratization of personal lives.

Overall, findings throughout this dissertation suggest that Flemish emerging adults are well acquainted with casual sexual intimacies such as one-night stands and friends with benefits. Remarkably, Flemish emerging adults tend to highly overestimate their peers' engagement in casual sex and used existing terms that presumably originated in the U.S. to describe their casual sexual experiences and relationships. As television often serves as a socializaing factor in cultures, it could be that the dominant position of U.S. television might have globally influenced changes in (perceptions of) intimacy and provided its viewers with vocabulary to discuss these topics. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to gain a better understanding of how exactly casual sexual behaviors are repeatedly shown in U.S. television shows, as these shows seem to function as global storytellers.

The results of the content analysis conducted in Chapter 2 suggest that casual sexual behaviors are almost as frequently shown in popular television programs as sexual behaviors within more traditional committed relationships. Interestingly, sexual behaviors within a committed relationship or date were mainly limited to passionate kissing, whereas sexual behavior within a casual sexual context consisted mostly of explicit portrayals of sexual intercourse. Such portrayals might give viewers the impression that casual sex has become the normative sexual script. In reality, however, sexual intercourse in the context of a relationship is more likely to occur than sexual intercourse in the context of a casual sexual interaction. While this content analysis does not allow for making any causal interference regarding actual casual sexual behavior, it certainly paves the way for media effects studies to examine how exactly exposure to the analyzed shows might influence perceptions of or engagement in casual sexual experiences and relationships.

Chapters 3 to 5 were carried out to examine whether Tinder leads to more casual sex. This was done so by exploring Tinder motives (Chapter 3), examining the associations between personality and both Tinder use and motives (Chapter 4), and analyzing how users go from swiping to having casual sex versus committed relationships (Chapter 5). While the findings derived from this dissertation provide some evidence to assume that mobile dating applications indeed contribute to changes in casual sexual intimacy, they also seem to promote the establishment of committed relationships. We thus should be careful not to confuse the perpetual and highly visible "newness" of media developments with a continuous transformation of all social and cultural arrangements. Clearly, studies related to casual sexual behavior have found a shift from dating behaviors to hookup behaviors even long before mobile dating applications existed. Consequently, mobile dating applications are not the cause of changes in casual sexual intimacy, but they do, however, create possibilities to obtain casual sex, for those who want it.

SAMENVATTING

Het is door grote sociale veranderingen, zoals het almaar toenemende aantal echtscheidingen en het onuitputtelijke aanbod aan potentiële partners, dat het voor jongvolwassenen steeds moeilijker wordt om zich te binden. Alsmaar meer mensen worden zich ervan bewust dat relaties niet eeuwig duren en vinden het zodoende belangrijker om in zichzelf te investeren. Relaties die niet langer wederzijdse tevredenheid of persoonlijke groei kunnen garanderen worden bijgevolg beëindigd. *Casual* seks, daarentegen, geeft jongvolwassenen de mogelijkheid een potentiële relatie volledig te verkennen, waardoor het concept van dating geleidelijk aan in een nieuw jasje werd gestoken. Tegenwoordig is het de gewoonte dat datingpartners elkaar op seksueel vlak exploreren alvorens ze enige vorm van exclusiviteit overwegen. In de Amerikaanse literatuur wordt dit fenomeen doorgaans omschreven als *hooking up*. Daarnaast is het belangrijk om te benadrukken dat verscheidene aspecten van het seksuele leven tegenwoordig vaak gemedieerd worden in westerse culturen. Dat betekent dat seksuele interacties regelmatig vertaald worden in symbolische inhoud door gebruik te maken van technologische en institutionele communicatiemiddelen. Volgens onderzoekers zijn dan ook de zichtbaarheid van seksuele media en nieuwe technologieën die *casual* seks faciliteren, deels verantwoordelijk voor de hervorming van intimiteit waarin niet langer het exclusieve maar juist het vrijblijvende centraal staat.

Dit doctoraat focust zich daarom op het verband tussen nieuwe media en casual seks, rekening houdend met zowel veranderingen in de media als culturele en sociale veranderingen die hebben bijgedragen aan veranderingen op het vlak van seksuele gedragingen. Kortom, dit doctoraat exploreert de mediatisering van casual seks door te focussen op zowel de rol van populaire Amerikaanse televisieseries als het gebruik van mobiele datingapplicaties binnen processen van sociale en culturele verandering. De mediatisering van deze processen is even belangrijk als en gerelateerd aan andere meta-processen die hebben bijgedragen tot de acceptatie van en een toename in het aantal casual seksuele interacties, zoals de individualisering en democratisering van het persoonlijke leven.

Algemeen genomen suggereren de bevindingen van dit doctoraat dat Vlaamse jongvolwassen zeer bekend zijn met casual seksuele interacties zoals one-night stands en casual seksuele relaties zoals *friends with benefits*. In hoofdstuk 1 hadden Vlaamse jongvolwassenen de neiging om het casual seksueel gedrag van hun leeftijdsgenoten sterk te overschatten. Daarnaast hanteerden ze vaak Engelstalige termen om deze gedragingen te beschrijven. Aangezien televisie-

inhouden vaak gepercipieerd worden als een socialiserende factor binnen bepaalde culturen, is het mogelijk dat de dominante positie van Amerikaanse televisie-inhouden een invloed heeft op globale veranderingen wat betreft (percepties van) casual seksueel gedrag. Daarnaast zou het ook kunnen dat deze Amerikaanse televisie-inhouden de kijkers een woordenschat bieden om onderwerpen zoals casual seks te bediscussiëren. Gezien deze socialiserende rol van Amerikaanse televisie was het noodzakelijk om beter te begrijpen binnen welke relationele context seksuele gedragingen vaak voorkomen in populaire Amerikaanse televisieseries.

De resultaten van de inhoudsanalyse (zie hoofdstuk 2) van dit doctoraat suggereren dat seksuele gedragingen in populaire Amerikaanse televisieseries bijna even vaak getoond worden binnen een casual seksuele context als binnen een exclusieve relatie. Opvallend is dat seksuele gedragingen die voorkwamen binnen een exclusieve relatie of date vaak enkel bestonden uit kussende koppels, terwijl seksuele gedragingen die voorkwamen binnen een casual seksuele context meestal bestonden uit expliciete vertoningen van geslachtsgemeenschap. Bijgevolg zou het kunnen dat kijkers ervan overtuigd raken dat *casual* seks het normatieve seksuele script is. In de realiteit hebben mensen in een vaste relatie echter vaker seks dan mensen die afhankelijk zijn van hun casual seksuele interacties. Hoewel deze inhoudsanalyse zeker geen causale uitspraken kan doen wat betreft de invloed van desbetreffende televisieseries op casual seksueel gedrag, kan het wel dienen als basis voor toekomstige media-effect studies die willen onderzoeken op welke manier blootstelling aan deze televisieseries een invloed heeft op (percepties van) casual seksueel gedrag.

Hoofdstukken 3 tot 5 hadden als doel te onderzoeken of de mobiele datingapplicatie Tinder leidt tot meer casual seks. Hiervoor werden eerst 13 Tindermotieven ontrafeld (hoofdstuk 3) en vervolgens de associaties tussen persoonlijkheid en zowel Tindergebruik als Tindermotieven onderzocht (hoofdstuk 4). Ten slotte werd in kaart gebracht hoe het *swipe* proces van Tindergebruikers uiteindelijk leidt tot het hebben van casual seks versus een serieuze relatie (hoofdstuk 5). Ondanks dat de resultaten van dit doctoraatsonderzoek enigszins impliceren dat mobiele datingapps inderdaad leiden tot meer casual seks, is het belangrijk om te benadrukken dat mobiele dating apps ook het aangaan van serieuze relaties promoten. Bovendien is dit een complex proces dat onder andere wordt bepaald door Tindermotieven en de persoonlijkheid van gebruikers. Tot slot mogen we ons zeker niet laten verleiden om recente technologische ontwikkelingen te verwarren met constante sociale en culturele veranderingen. Er is bijvoorbeeld voldoende bewijs om aan te tonen dat de toename in casual seksueel gedrag al geobserveerd werd vóór het ontstaan van mobiele datingapps. We kunnen dus besluiten dat mobiele datingapps op zich zeker niet leiden tot meer casual seks, maar aan de andere kant wel mogelijkheden creëren om casual seks te verkrijgen voor zij die ernaar op zoek zijn.

BIJLAGE: DOCTORATEN IN DE SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

EN

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